

**RE-COMMUNICATING BIBLICAL NARRATIVE TO POST-LITERATE
SALVATION ARMY CONGREGATIONS**

A THESIS

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This work is for the glory of the triune God who saves, keeps, and has prepared a glorious homecoming. I owe a continuing debt of gratitude and acknowledgement of inspiration to my longsuffering wife and ministry partner for nearly thirty-two years without whom I would have quit many things a long time ago. Our children Beth, Tara, and Eric are my greatest cheerleaders. I will be forever grateful to the comrades of the Nashua, New Hampshire Salvation Army corps for their encouragement and willingness to grow along with me. I would be less than a hireling if I failed to express my gratitude to The Salvation Army that has given me what I still believe to be a viable vehicle for evangelism and discipleship for the present age. Finally, Dr. Jeffrey D. Arthurs has exercised his considerable pedagogical gifts in teaching this “old dog” new tricks in the service of saving souls and nurturing saints through the “foolishness of preaching.”

CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	v
ABSTRACT.....	vi
Chapter	
1. THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING.....	1
2. THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK.....	17
3. LITERATURE REVIEW: GOSPEL RHETORIC IN THE POST EVERYTHING WORLD	39
4. PROJECT DESIGN	62
5. OUTCOMES.....	84
Appendix	
1. FORMAT FOR SERMONS	95
2. SALVATION ARMY DOCTRINES	96
3. FEED FORWARD SURVEY WITH RESPONSES	98
4. FEED BACK SURVEY WITH RESPONSES	106
5. SERMON SERIES.....	111
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	130
VITA	138

FIGURES

1. Participation in Feed Forward Survey	77
2. Narrative Oriented Responses.....	78
3. Feed Back Survey Responses	87

ABSTRACT

When William Booth founded The Salvation Army in the 1860s, he implemented innovative preaching and worship styles. They remain in use today. This thesis-project argues that the changing ecology of communication demands that Salvation Army preachers adapt to the current communications environment. The theology and praxis of Revivalism remain malleable enough to serve the present age, and the grace reflected in the Army's Social Work outreach is easily understood, but a style of preaching stuck in Victorian rhetorical convention is ineffective. This thesis-project surveys the history of preaching within the Salvation Army, and alternative ways to portray Scripture to listeners attuned to the electronic post-everything age. Research elicited feed forward and feed back survey responses from a congregation to whom a Salvation Army minister delivered sermons in a modern style. The author concludes that training Salvation Army preachers to recommunicate Biblical narrative narratively will enable them to communicate better to post-literate Salvation Army congregations.

CHAPTER 1 THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

Booth led boldly with his big bass drum –
(Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)

– Vachel Lindsay, "General William Booth
Enters Heaven"

The Salvation Army has an historical reputation for its emphasis on evangelism and its Revivalist style of preaching among the most disenfranchised of society. Preaching has been and continues to be integral to both the mission and method of Salvation Army ministry. Salvationist missionaries remain specially called to proclaim the good news through service-oriented evangelism and to exhort Salvation Army congregations towards biblical holiness. This thesis-project celebrates a rich history and makes suggestions for greater effectiveness in training Gospel heralds to serve the next generation. This chapter will briefly survey Salvation Army history in terms of how preaching and training of preachers has developed. It also will explore the central issue of this thesis-project, the changing ecology of communication since World War II and the challenges it has created for the Salvation Army as it heralds the Gospel. Here I will state the central issues of this Thesis-Project. Part Three will summarize the project's Marching Orders¹ going forward. John Stott on the preacher as herald makes a statement that is an ensign for the Salvationist missionary: "The true herald of God is careful first to make a thorough and thoughtful proclamation of God's great deed of redemption through

¹ In the quasi-military system of the Salvation Army (hereafter, TSA), the phrase *Marching Orders* indicates the new assignment of Officers and their new roles in those assignments.

Christ's cross, and then to issue a sincere and earnest appeal to men to repent and believe."²

The Old Open Air in a New Neighborhood

William Booth, founder of The Salvation Army, embraced his life's calling in the squalor of Victorian London's East End where one of every five houses was a gin mill. Roger Green describes Booth's parish as a place of social and spiritual fermentation: "Cheap licenses permitted the sale of untaxed beer, cider, and perry."³ There were 49,130 licensed beer-shops by 1869."⁴ During Great Britain's Industrial Revolution, London's Whitechapel was ground zero in terms of human misery. This was the context into which, on July 2, 1865, Booth was invited to preach in the place of an ailing evangelist in a section of East London known as Mile End Waste – so called because snow removed from the streets was piled on this otherwise useless tract of land. A tattered tent anchored in an abandoned burial ground lit by smoky gaslight flames became William Booth's personal burning bush. Booth's Aaron, George Scott Railton, records the Army founder's words to his wife when he returned home that same evening:

O Kate, I have found my destiny! These are the people for whose salvation I have been longing all these years. As I passed by the doors of the flaming gin-palaces to-night I seemed to hear a voice sounding in my ears, where can you go and find such heathen as these, and where is there so great a need for your labors? And there and then in my soul I offered myself and you and the children up to God for this great work. Those people shall be our people and they shall have our God for their God.⁵

² John R. W. Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 58.

³ Perry was a fermented drink made from pears similar to so-called hard cider.

⁴ Roger J. Green, *The Life and Ministry of William Booth* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 106.

⁵ G.S. Railton, *The Authoritative Life of General William Booth* (New York: Reliance Trading Company, 1912), 56.

Whitechapel in the East End of London was a Dickensian caricature of England in the Industrial Revolution. Here was the Petri dish that spawned the Salvation Army's preaching ministry. The cultural context of East London grounds this thesis insofar as it dictated how the Gospel might be effectively communicated in Victorian England's sordid underbelly. Inhumane conditions such as open sewers, overcrowded living spaces, child prostitution, and political corruption existed as part of a much longer list of social ills. The language of the streets was the syntax of cockney curses, with two-fisted rhetoricians regularly exercising their influence. Enter William Booth, pugilist for Christ. One of Booth's early converts was a drunken Irish street brawler and chimney sweep, Elijah Cadman, whom he confronted for Jesus outside the notorious Blind Beggar public house. Fifty years later Cadman said of the General: "It was the poor people he looked for from start to finish. All day long he was at it, preaching, praying, singing, writing, talking, journeying – always for the poor."⁶

The Army's founder was by trade an itinerant evangelist. As Green makes clear, Booth never intended to merge what are today the fields of Social Work and Crusade Evangelism in his ministry to the denizens of East London:

Although at this time he had no social plan for the alleviation of their physical poverty, he did believe with perfect faith that he had the answer to their spiritual poverty. He knew intuitively that alleviating the suffering of the poor would prevent society from falling into chaos. This was not his primary motivation for preaching the Gospel, but an outcome of that preaching.⁷

Booth's seminal work, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, was one of the first primers on the discipline of Social Work. His intent was to erect a platform from which

⁶Harold Begbie, *Life of William Booth* (London: Macmillan, 1920), 303.

⁷ Green, *William Booth*, 109.

to articulate the Gospel message. In Booth's own words: "The Scheme may aptly be compared to a great machine teaching them [the destitute] methods by which alike the bread that perishes and that which endures to Everlasting Life can be won."⁸ Booth was always first and foremost the preacher, and his methods may be seen as cutting edge innovations in terms of audience adaptation. At that time, such gimmicks as the use of a brass band to attract attention and a non-liturgical worship form that focused on audience/congregational testimony were seen as outlandish. And, in stark contrast to a state church that had become priggish, Booth's proclamation and mercy ministries paralleled Jesus' parables, feeding, healing, and modeling of social justice.

William and Catherine Booth's preaching melded Revivalism with social conscience. Catherine's boldness in taking to the Victorian era pulpit epitomized the Army founders. The Booths drew inspiration and mentoring in their preaching style from many great hearts of preaching. Foremost among these shaping forces, according to John Coutts, were three American Revivalist preachers: James Caughey (American Methodist evangelist), Phoebe Palmer (Methodist lay revivalist connected with the Third Great Awakening), and Charles Grandison Finney.⁹ Finney's *Revival Lectures* became an early preaching text for the Booths and their fledgling Salvation Army. Their son-in-law Frederick Booth-Tucker states in the introduction of Finney:

This abridged edition has been prepared, at the request of the General, with the earnest hope that it may enable sincere soul-lovers to become successful soul-winners. The volume of Lectures has been my constant companion for the last

⁸ William Booth, *In Darkest England and The Way Out* (1890; repr., Atlanta: Salvation Army Supplies and Purchasing, 1984), 101.

⁹ John Coutts, "The Booths' American Mentors," *Christian History* 9, no.2: 21-23.

fifty years; I can confidently recommend it to all who would learn how to bring the lost to the Saviour.¹⁰

The lecture entitled “How to Preach the Gospel” illustrates both Revivalist preaching and theology.¹¹ Finney’s rhetoric of suasion is represented here in his description of desired preachers and the aim of revivalist proclamation: “Ministers should not be chosen for their popularity, or learning, but for their ability to win souls. Apart from this, however learned and popular, they are a deadweight.”¹² Echoing Finney, William Booth writes: “Your aim is to bring the very rebels against God who sit before you to His feet there and then – to make those who have already submitted themselves to His control better and happier and holier and more useful – and you want them to decide in favor of these things during that service.”¹³ Thus, the Booths set out not only to provoke a spiritual awakening and decision for Christ among the masses, but to effect change in behaviors and so influence the culture.

The Revivalist style of preaching embraced by the Founders of The Salvation Army reflected the florid and often poetic oratory of Queen Victoria’s day. William Booth’s most famous sermon combines his passion for souls with a freedom fighter’s fervor: “While women weep, as they do now, I’ll fight; while little children go hungry, as they do now, I’ll fight; while men go to prison, in and out, in and out, as they do now,

¹⁰ Frederick Booth-Tucker, *A Summary of Finney’s Revival Lectures* (London: Salvationist Publishing & Supplies, Ltd., 1926), introduction.

¹¹ Booth-Tucker, *Summary of Finney’s Lectures*, 50-56.

¹² Booth-Tucker, *Summary of Finney’s Lectures*, 56

¹³ William Booth, *How to Preach* (New York: Salvation Army Eastern Territory Literary Council, 1979), 56.

I'll fight. I'll fight to the very end.”¹⁴ The Booths' brand of Gospel proclamation was taught in their battle schools as one might expect. Archived pictures, newspaper, and internal reporting document that this style found great resonance as the Booths employed the rhetoric and communications media of their day. Because of this, it is surprising that Gospel proclamation training methods in the Salvation Army remained largely unchanged from the early Mile End Waste days through World War II and beyond, as I will show later.

In fairness to the Booth family and their closest protégés, the paradigm of their brand of Victorian Revivalism fostered a movement that enjoyed great success for more than a generation. From William Booth's death in 1912 until the post WWII era the Army enjoyed almost exponential growth as the following extracts from the Salvation Army Year Book of 1947 demonstrate:

17,915	Corps (local worship and program centers) and Outposts (church plants)
27,811	Officers (clergy)
104,324	Local Officers (commissioned lay leaders)
100	Periodicals (The War Cry – various languages) with 1,638,446 copies printed regularly.
34,172,355	Meals Served

The Salvation Army had a presence in some seventy-six sovereign states working among one hundred ten ethnic groups in one hundred two languages.¹⁵

¹⁴ Begbie, *Life of Booth*, 2:317, 318.

¹⁵ *1947 Year Book* (London: Salvationist Publishing and Supplies, 1947), 22-23.

But Salvationist preaching was not caught up in this dynamic developmental process, especially in the training of next generation clergy. Early Salvation Army evangelists focused on preaching the salvation experience and giving testimony to whomever would listen. Biblical exposition was considered secondary, and almost an impediment to spiritual health, as the following comment from William Booth indicates. When asked if his people studied the Bible, the General responded:

Yes, they read it, often in public, and expound it some. But often they don't understand it. One of my dear men, saved by God's grace, came to "Alpha and Omega," and boldly read it, "I am apples and oranges," and it meant a good deal more to some of them than if he had read it right. We don't form Bible classes; we find they lead to divisions and disputing. But I believe in the Bible from end to end.¹⁶

A more circumspect Booth would grow in his own theology to become a staunch advocate of accurate expository preaching as I will show in Chapter 2. He would fully embrace redemption and the biblical holiness doctrine of John Wesley as central to his own theology.

Booth did not simply leave his evangelists to their own devices. While he did not create a lectionary as such, collections of readymade outlines were published to assist sermon preparation, particularly for those missionaries already at war. In recognition of the growing need to be better equipped in the pulpit, a collection of sermon outlines offers the following in its introductory remarks: "These outlines, prepared by experienced officers who have sought to meet the varying needs of those who hear the word of God in Army halls and at open-air meetings, should help him to do so. What framework is to the house-builder, so is the address outline to the preacher, revealing the design of his mind

¹⁶ R. G. Moyles, ed., *I Knew William Booth* (Alexandria: Crest, 2007), 12.

as well as the desire of his heart.”¹⁷ The foregoing comment reflects a fundamental recognition that the Army needed to equip its preachers to communicate ever more effectively if it wanted its brand of Revivalism to be heard. Unfortunately, after the Booth family died off, this vision appears to have been lost.

From 1879 forward, Booth began to establish Training Garrisons. One of those garrisons is the School For Officer Training in Suffern, New York, just north of New York City. SFOT is representative of Salvation Army battle schools in nearly every nation where the Army has a work. The homiletics section of Suffern’s Brengle Memorial Library contains a broad range of resources representing various media and methods and rooted primarily in evangelical thinking. These resources are available for the entire community, as well as visiting Salvation Army clergy. One fascinating discovery I made at this library is that there were only three extant syllabi for preaching classes from 1938 through the 1990s. Further investigation and query with the librarian indicated that syllabi were not revised. Thus, these syllabi compiled in 1966, 1981, and 1999 respectively all reflect essentially the same teaching material, utilizing resources dating from 1938. The 1966 syllabus entitled “Homiletics: Preparing to Preach” discusses various “methods.”¹⁸ Each of these methods teaches propositional preaching with points best presented alliteratively. For example, an outline for a lesson entitled “Going God’s Way” suggests three sections: Personal Decision, based on 2 Cor. 12:14; Purposeful Decision, based on 2 Tim. 1:9; and Profitable Decision, based on I Tim. 4:8.¹⁹

¹⁷ The Salvation Army, *Outlines of Address: For the Use of Salvation Army Officers* (London: Salvationist Publishing and Supplies, Ltd., 1940, 1957), foreword.

¹⁸ The Salvation Army, *Homiletics: Preparing to Preach* rev. ed. (New York: School for Officer’s Training, 1969), 5.

¹⁹ The Salvation Army, *Preparing to Preach*, 57.

One encouraging note that then curriculum director Captain Gordon Sparks offered is that Dr. Elio Cuccaro of Nyack College in nearby Nyack, New York was retained in the late 1990s to update Homiletics at SFOT. That said, the current majority of Baby Boomer Officers and subsequent generations of Salvation Army Cadets have been trained in preaching styles from the 1940s. These sound esoteric to post-literate ears.

Having laid the groundwork concerning relevant Salvation Army preaching, I move in the next section to look at some challenges for Gospel proclamation in a changing ecology of communication.

"Why should the devil have all the best tunes?"²⁰

"Charge straight ahead and kick them [the electronic media] in the electrodes!"
– Marshall McLuhan, in *Playboy* interview

A Revivalist style of communicating the Gospel steeped in the traditions of Caughey, Finney, and Palmer does not appear to connect with the current post-literate generation. One indicator of this disconnect is the relative stagnancy in the Salvation Army in membership from 1960 to 2007.²¹ Despite an apparent increase in attendance the Salvation Army seemed to struggle with efforts to increase members. At the end of the twentieth century the Army held to the same number of senior members as in the mid-

²⁰ William Booth to his Aide at Worcester, England on January 22, 1882. The Salvation Army International Heritage Center, <http://www1.salvationarmy.org/heritage.nsf/0/42d53ced9ec1583080256954004bff3e!OpenDocument&ExpandSection=1> (accessed Oct. 10, 2010).

²¹ During this period the number of Senior Soldiers (adult fully fledged church members) has remained at approximately 21,000, according to records held at The Salvation Army Territorial Headquarters (USA East), W. Nyack, NY.

century. I say apparent because how the Army has counted Sunday Worship has changed at least three times in this period, according to data in the statistical archives. My inspection of the records at Territorial Headquarters reflected that who recorded the statistics, what defined Sunday Worship, and whether or not specialized ministries were counted represented at least three paradigms. Even with the change of how data was recorded, given the rise in population during this period in the eleven eastern states that comprise USA East Territory,²² this represents a serious downward trend.

I would argue that what was tried and true even to the post-Booth-family generation has proved to be tired and terminal in the post WWII generations. The stagnancy in those becoming Senior Soldiers (adult members), the real decline in Sunday Holiness Meeting attendance, and the decline in active Bands and Songster Brigades (senior choirs) all suggest a cultural disconnect. The Army's reticence towards change is something of an enigma in the face of William Booth's legacy of commandeering any media and method that would give his gospel entrée to the hearts of the masses. Conservative though he may have been, his emphasis on testimony above text, brass bands to attract a crowd (and burley brass bandsmen who doubled as bodyguards), and even beer hall tunes accompanying sacred words became weapons in Booth's salvation warfare. Booth found no affront to the sacred in marrying the words "Bless His name, He set me free" by Captain William Baugh to the tune "Champagne Charlie Is My Name." "There were no qualms of conscience. Many people gathered there [Worcester,

²² USA East Territory includes Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Ohio, and northeast Kentucky.

England] knew none of the hymn tunes or gospel melodies used in the churches; the music hall had been their melody school.”²³

William Booth’s audience did not understand the ways of the religious mainstream, and their pedestrian and unkempt presence was unwelcome at church. Consequently, they required a new language. Perhaps one of the greatest strengths of the Booths and their colleagues was their willingness to abandon rhetorical convention in the service of convening sinners at the Mourner’s Bench. The same intuition and creative risk taking that caused Booth to employ blaring brass bands inspired him to sanctify gadgetry that was as outlandish as the Wright Brothers’ flying machine and other technology that his contemporaries seemed sure would never take hold. Booth turned in his circuit-riding saddle for a motorcar. Audio recordings of his sermons and speeches were arrows in his communications quiver. The Salvation Army’s archives even preserve the 1912 funeral of William Booth on film.

In stark contrast to the Salvation Army’s early embrace of communications technology, since World War II the Army appears to have failed to learn the language of a new generation. This disconnect in the Army’s ability to proclaim the Gospel effectively suggests the central question of this thesis: How can Salvation Army preachers adapt to their current communications environment in order to communicate the Gospel message with early day effectiveness?

One way to get at the answer is to take a look at how communication ecology has evolved, generally and within the Salvation Army in particular, from the mid-twentieth

²³ The Salvation Army, "The Best Tunes."

century forward. David L. Altheide of Arizona State University offers one definition of communication ecology:

In its broadest terms, the ecology of communication refers to the structure, organization, and accessibility of information technology, various forums, media, and channels of information. It is incontestable that media and technology can make a difference in social life, although the nature and extent of this difference remains an issue.²⁴

Altheide's definition contrasts communication in the age of literacy with the emergence of secondary orality. He understands that twenty-first century communication involves a multidimensional environment. No longer do we simply read a book. With the advent of the electronic media, we now can often see, hear, and sometimes even smell that book. Altheide sees the virtual "lay of the land" as integral and organic in a communications process. He further asserts:

While it is commonplace among social theorists that the message reflects the process by which it was constituted, they have paid much less attention to how social activities are joined interactively in a communication environment, and particularly how the techniques and technology associated with certain communicative acts contribute to the action. Just as the dimensions of a baseball field contribute to the nature, style, and quality of play, so do the information technologies and organizing formats influence social activities.²⁵

No discussion of how the ecology of communications has developed since World War II is complete without the voice of Marshall McLuhan. In 1969, Eric Norden dubbed McLuhan "the high priest of popcult and metaphysician of media."²⁶ McLuhan might have preferred to be described as a student of his environment and prophet of

²⁴ David Altheide, *An Ecology of Communication* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1995), 2.

²⁵ Altheide, *Ecology of Communication*, 1.

²⁶ Eric Norden, "The Playboy Interview, Marshall McLuhan," *Playboy*, March 1969 <http://www.cs.ucdavis.edu/~rogaway/classes/188/spring07/mcluhan.pdf> (accessed August 14, 2009).

communicative happenings, one who was “probing and predicting trends.”²⁷ Regardless of the label that one applies, McLuhan possessed a unique capacity to analyze communication. The following observation displays his understanding of a communications landscape in great flux:

Today’s child is growing up absurd because he is suspended between two worlds and two value systems, neither of which inclines him to maturity because he belongs wholly to neither but exists in a hybrid limbo of constantly conflicting values. The challenge of the new era is simply the total creative process of growing up – and mere teaching and repetition of facts are as irrelevant to this process as a dowser to a nuclear power plant. To expect a “turned on” child of the electric age to respond to the old education modes is rather like expecting an eagle to swim. It’s simply not within his environment, and therefore incomprehensible.²⁸

For example, in the *Playboy* interview, McLuhan lays down a gauntlet at the feet of the media: “It’s vital to adopt a posture of arrogant superiority; instead of scurrying into a corner and wailing about what media are doing to us, one should charge straight ahead and kick them in the electrodes. They respond beautifully to such resolute treatment and soon become servants rather than masters.”²⁹ For our purposes perhaps the most important observations McLuhan offers in terms of confronting the shift in communications ecology center on the issues of an emerging post-literate oral/aural culture, which in the *Playboy* interview he called “retribalization.”

The trend that McLuhan observed towards orality continues to the present. Grant Lovejoy states: “Researchers do not know precisely how many people have a preference for oral rather than literate forms of communications, but available research suggests that

²⁷ Norden, “Playboy Interview,” 29.

²⁸ Norden, “Playboy Interview,” 16.

²⁹ Norden, “Playboy Interview,” 32.

they constitute a majority of the populations of the United States and Canada. Orality is even more prevalent outside the developed world.”³⁰ Everyone wants to tell their story, it seems, whether by Twitters, texts, IMs, or by engaging in an actual conversation. In this age of story, even such rhetorical devices as personal ringtones are chosen as symbols of an individual's personal narrative.

How, then, can Salvation Army preachers adapt to the current communications environment? The trends identified by McLuhan, Lovejoy, and many others indicate that the king and queen of current discourse are image and story. Lovejoy suggests that “an obvious first step for preachers is to utilize biblical narratives as texts and retain those texts’ narrative character in the sermon. Oral cultures store most of their heritage, religion, traditions and values in story form.”³¹ If Lovejoy is right, Salvation Army preachers must recognize that this is a generation of story, and portray the Gospel accordingly. Gary McIntosh goes a step further than Lovejoy in his strategy to reach the generation known as “The Bridger Wave” or “Gen Net”:

The key to winning them is to engage them with a compelling true story of faith. Such a storytelling approach takes more time, as well as good listening skills, but it works when Bridgers are drawn into the process by letting them tell their story and then relating Jesus’ story to theirs. The twenty-first century will find Bridgers searching for meaning, which they will find in stories that tell them who they are. Stories have the ability to touch their hearts.³²

“Why should the devil have all the best tunes?” was William Booth's response when others objected to his marriage of beer hall tunes to sacred texts. The same pioneering spirit that enabled him to break out of rhetorical encagement still encourages

³⁰ Grant Lovejoy, “But I Did Such Good Exposition: Literate Preachers Confront Orality,” *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletical Society* 1, no. 1 (2001), 28, 29.

³¹ Lovejoy, “Such Good Exposition,” 30.

³² Gary L. McIntosh, *One Church, Four Generations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 188.

Bill Booth's Army as the Bridger Generation begins to mature. Today the beer hall tune that everyone is humming is story. Salvation Army preachers must learn to recommunicate Biblical narrative narratively, so they can better communicate to post-literate Salvation Army congregations.

"On we march!"³³ An Overview of This Thesis-Project

"And the Saviour's love will be the theme of our song"

– Brigadier Charles Mehling

This final section will briefly outline my plan for developing a style of Salvation Army proclamation that will enable Revivalists to connect with citizens of the brave new world of image and story. Jeffrey Arthurs' sage advice for preachers helps to set the stage: "We must patiently help people distinguish between Biblical doctrine and communicative procedure, and in the midst of that patient instruction, we can find encouragement in the fact that most North Americans in the twenty-first century have been socialized to expect variety and multiple perspectives."³⁴ For the expository preacher this means preaching that respects and reflects the literary genre of a biblical passage. Preaching the literary forms of the Bible is an overarching principle of this thesis-project. We live in an age of story and neo-orality, and consequently, the Salvation Army preacher will communicate most effectively by considering literary form as well as content – in other words, by preaching narrative narratively.

Chapter 2 defines the Salvationist niche in preaching, exploring and developing a theology of Scripture, redemption, and biblical holiness. The Salvation Army

³³ *The Salvation Army Song Book* (Verona, NJ: The Salvation Army National Headquarters, 1987), 192.

³⁴ Jeffrey D. Arthurs, *Preaching With Variety* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 17.

emphasizes the preacher's responsibility to faithfully declare the kerygmatic Gospel; one way to honor the kerygma is to preach in ways that reflect the literary forms found in the Word. Chapter 3 reviews the literature about approaches to narrative preaching. This chapter discusses Salvation Army homiletical history, theories of orality/aurality, and narrative, and the resulting implications for preaching. Chapter 4 reports on the project proper, which involved a small heterogeneous group of parishioners who were willing partners throughout this journey. There were three parts: Part 1 was a feed-forward survey of the small group implemented in an open-ended interview style. Part 2 was a genre sensitive preaching series to this group of parishioners, of four sermons from texts in Luke. In Part 3 the same test group was reconvened for further feedback, to measure the group's sense of connection. In Chapter 5, I assess the value of genre sensitive preaching (particularly narrative) as a tool that equips Salvation Army preachers in the current post-literate generation and forward. As the Salvationist missionary of days gone by reminds us, "The Lord's command to go into the world and preach the gospel unto all, is just as true today as when his first disciples heard this mighty call."³⁵

³⁵ *The Salvation Army Song Book*, 192 (song 700).

CHAPTER 2 THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

For strength to ever do the right,
For grace to conquer in the fight,
power to walk the world in white,
Send the fire!

—William Booth

Three areas of theology inform this thesis-project: inspiration of Scripture, soteriology and the Wesleyan doctrine of biblical holiness, and Gospel proclamation. First, I will lift up Scripture as the *Logos* of God. Second, I will parallel Wesley's "order of salvation" with the Salvation Army doctrines of redemption and biblical holiness. Third and finally, I will make some observations in terms of how Scripture and The Salvation Army's expression of Revivalist theology fashion our embodiment of the Gospel and kerygmatic proclamation for this generation.

Giving out the Gospel (kerygmatic proclamation) continues to be The Salvation Army's *raison d'être*. Booth's brand of Revivalism is firmly anchored in a teaching of universally available regeneration and the Wesleyan doctrine of biblical holiness. The Salvation Army founder was drawn ever closer to the Reformers view of *sola scriptura*. "I want my people," said an older and wiser William Booth,¹ "to read the Bible with an eye on their obligation to follow Jesus Christ in that life of self-denying service He led to seek and save the souls of men. I want such a Bible-reading as will make Salvationists

¹ Booth in his younger days eschewed his Missioners for their mishandling of the Scriptures, preferring for them to tell their personal stories of saving grace. See Chapter 1, p. 7.

who shall be truly Christ men and Christ women; that is to say, imitators of their Lord.”² Clearly, Booth held an agenda for how he wanted his missionaries to read Scripture. For William Booth, to be “Christ men and Christ women” meant to continually and passionately imitate Jesus, which implied a constant modeling of Jesus following the most accurate portrait found only in the Bible. With Wesley, he wanted his people to be persons of one book.

The *Logos* of God

“Let me be *homo unius libri*.”

— John Wesley

The direct revelation and rule of God found in Scripture is a cardinal doctrine for The Salvation Army. For that reason the Bible stands as the denomination’s foundational and first statement of faith and call to action. Article One of the Salvation Army doctrines states: “We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and that they only constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice.”³ We experience the Bible as the singular document in which God reveals Himself, his redemptive will for human kind, and the eschatological destiny for all things created. Having said that, what is this Scripture we simply call “The Bible?” Second, what is meant by “inspiration of God?” Finally, where does this authoritative book derive its entitlement to rule which the Wesleyan-Arminian tradition submits to for shaping core values and praxis?

² John D. Waldron, *The Salvationist and the Scripture* (New York: The Salvation Army, 1988), 106.

³ The Salvation Army, *Salvation Story: Salvationist Handbook of Doctrine* (London: 1998), ix.

Scripture in its narrowest sense is comprised of those writings considered to be eligible for inclusion in the canon. What do we recognize as canon, that straight rod or measuring reed external standard? The Salvation Army acknowledges along with other evangelicals the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament as the canon closed at the Council of Jamnia *ca.* AD 91. We recognize also the twenty-seven books of the New Testament as the Council of Carthage ratified in AD 397 (some scholars date this to 419). Like many other books that are helpful for edification, we similarly appreciate the encouragement of the Apocrypha.

Salvationist evangelicals understand holy writ as God's word spoken in time. The Bible is God's express revelation to us in ways that are both personal and propositional, story and statement, his *Logos* cached on the hard-drive of human personality. The Salvation Army's doctrine book says: "God's word has been given to us in the recorded experiences of men and women of faith over many centuries. The Bible is the fruit of a living relationship between God and his people in a particular historical context."⁴ This relationship is God-initiated and reflected through God's specific self-revelation. Wiley talks about revelation as the greatness of God communicated to minds that are utterly incapable of understanding His greatness: "By revelation we understand a direct communication from God to man of such knowledge as is beyond the power of his reason to attain, or for whatever cause was not known to the person who received it."⁵ Dunning says of special revelation: "It [the Gospel] is not a body of abstract teaching involving a doctrine to be believed so much as it is an announcement that God has done something in

⁴ The Salvation Army, *Salvation Story*, 2.

⁵ H. Orton Wiley and Paul T. Culbertson, *Introduction to Christian Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1946), 49.

history, and what He has done is His last and decisive act.”⁶ Erickson further underscores mankind’s need of God’s self-unveiling when he says: “Humans cannot reach up to investigate God and would not understand even if they could. So God has revealed himself by a revelation in *anthropic* form.”⁷ I can only marvel at God’s trust in totally inept and flawed agents to communicate who he is, his intentions for all creation including man, and the enunciation of his final goals for that creation. Every evidence I know of from Biblical archeology to the internal witness of the Holy Spirit within me underscores Scripture as irreducible truth.

While the writers must have a certain credentialing profile such as “Prophet” or “Apostle,” the final measure of canonicity lies within the Bible and the internal integrity of its message. The councils cited could only acknowledge God’s breathing on the ink of human penmanship. At the same time, scientific attempts to either prove or disprove Scripture have tended to affirm these oracles of God. The Dead Sea Scrolls offer one dramatic illustration.⁸ These fragments so miraculously preserved across the ages verify the reliability of what has come down to us in their meticulous copies almost as ancient as the original documents. That said, Scripture reflects direct interaction with God as he chooses to reveal himself. William Newton Clarke states: “The canon was the outcome of the religious life that sprang from the divine revelation: that is to say, revelation first produced its own divine life in men, and then through that life produced, collected, and

⁶ H. Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1988), 172.

⁷ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 204.

⁸ This is not a statement in support of literal inerrancy. Such a position, in my opinion reflects a misunderstanding of the nature of Scripture. I would argue for the infallibility of Scripture in terms of inspiration and authority in the life of the church and the believer, however.

organized its records and other literary memorials.”⁹ On the essential nature of the inspiration of Scripture, Fee and Stuart write:

Because the Bible is *God’s Word*, it has *eternal relevance*; it speaks to all humankind, in every age and in every culture. But because God chose to speak his Word through *human words in history*, every book in the Bible also has *historical particularity*; each document is conditioned by the language, time, and culture in which it was originally written (and oral history).¹⁰

Following Fee and Stuart, J. Kenneth Grider argues for the dynamic theory of inspiration that celebrates human personality in Scripture. “It [the dynamic theory] preserves the scriptural truth that God speaks through human agencies, but insists that the agent is not reduced to a mere passive instrument.”¹¹ God initiated a collaboration that is recognizable as He speaks his word through human agency, figuratively breathing out his word.

Thus, Scripture has the right to rule. Scripture is inspired by God. He reveals his nature and purpose in this book. What has come down to us through the ages portrays God’s ways and His promises (Isaiah 55:9-11).¹² What we have carries the force of law, his personal covenant with authority. One definition of biblical authority is: “The objective word, the written Scripture, together with the subjective word, the inner illumination and conviction of the Holy Spirit, constitutes the authority for the Christian.”¹³ The centerpiece of the Salvation Army’s first article of faith is God’s

⁹ Wiley and Culberston, *Introduction to Theology*, 56.

¹⁰ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 21.

¹¹ J. Kenneth Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1994), 67.

¹² Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural references are from the New International Version.

¹³ Grider, *Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 277.

inspiration with God's authority. The Salvation Army doctrine book teaches: "What the authors wrote was not their own work only, but also the work and word of God."¹⁴ The final clause of Article One states of the Scriptures that "they only constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice." John Wesley says: "The foundation of true religion stands upon the oracles of God. It is built upon the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone."¹⁵ We rest first on Scripture as not only the right rule but as the only living document with the right to rule our faith, our lives, and our eschatological hope.

Scripture as God's inspired Word with absolute authority is foundational to this thesis-project. There are certain implications to my thesis that training Salvation Army preachers how to recommunicate Biblical narrative narratively will enable them to communicate better to post-literate Salvation Army congregations. Such a high view of Scripture presses us to accurately picture the God of the Bible. The storyteller portrays God's story, not her own. How the narrative plays out must highlight the Bible's great themes. Whether it shows that God provides for redemption, tests his friends, or forecasts a new heaven and a new earth, the narrator must always tell what was told. It is imperative for Salvation Army preachers to learn to tell God's story, revealed in Scripture, to a new generation. The next section of this chapter will reflect on our heritage of holiness and explore its implications for the post-modern Salvationist preacher.

¹⁴ The Salvation Army, *Salvation Story*, 6.

¹⁵ A. D. Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 128.

The Active Grace of God: A Wesleyan Soteriology and Doctrine of Biblical Holiness

“These are written down so you will believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and in the act of believing, have real and eternal life in the way he personally revealed it.”

—John 20:31 (*The Message*)

Wesley’s “order of salvation”¹⁶ influences our denominational understanding of grace in Scripture and is of special interest to this thesis-project for its impact on our preaching. This section moves from Scripture defined to Scripture doing. Articles Five through Ten of the Salvation Army doctrines¹⁷ shape the core of our/my beliefs in terms of redemption and the Wesleyan doctrine of biblical holiness. I will survey these briefly as they are informed by John Wesley’s concepts¹⁸ of prevenient grace, repentance, justification, regeneration, and sanctification. A Salvationist apothegm declares that the point of grace is the business of “GETTING SAVED, KEEPING SAVED, and GETTING OTHERS SAVED!” “William Booth clearly believed and taught the doctrines of salvation and sanctification largely as he understood them from his Wesleyan heritage. Booth preached redemption and the biblical doctrine of holiness was part of God’s redemptive purpose for every believer. That doctrine was not an amendment to his theology, but the core of his theology.”¹⁹

The following introductory remarks from Commissioner Samuel Logan Brengle’s *Heart Talks on Holiness* offer a fitting précis for this next section in which we

¹⁶ Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longdon, *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 25.

¹⁷ Appendix 1.

¹⁸ Oden and Longdon, *Outler*, 25.

¹⁹ Roger J. Green, *The Life & Ministry of William Booth* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 34.

will treat Wesleyan and Salvation Army teaching on redemption and biblical holiness along side each other:

The Son of God came into this world, and lived, and toiled, and taught, and suffered, and died and rose again in order to accomplish a two-fold purpose. . . . His justification, and regeneration, which are done *for* us and in us . . . that He might destroy the works of the devil.²⁰

Grace is the *Logos* acting in Wesley's soteriology, and by legacy, in the Salvation Army's.

Article Five of the Salvation Army doctrines states the case for human need of God's salvation: "We believe that our first parents were created in a state of innocence, but by their disobedience they lost their happiness, and that in consequence of their fall all men have become sinners, totally depraved, and as such are justly exposed to the wrath of God."²¹ We were God's crowning glory in the creation. We were made to love Him, manage his creation, and reflect His creative activity in child rearing. But, Adam's willful disobedience opened every part of our nature to the pervasive invasion of sin (Romans 5:12-14²²). And now our history as a race is that we are willful participants in our own demise.

Prevenient Grace

Prevenient grace is the preliminary work of the Godhead in Wesley's *Ordo Salutis* soteriology. God exercises his patience towards us by not punishing us

²⁰ Samuel Logan Brengle, *Heart Talks on Holiness* (1897; repr., Atlanta: The Salvation Army, 1988), 1.

²¹ The Salvation Army, *Salvation Story*, 58.

²² ¹² Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—¹³ for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come. (NIV)

immediately, swiftly, and finally for our every sinful act and the sin principle within. Hosea reflects God's restraint towards human rebellion when he reflects God's gracious merciful love: "My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my burning anger" (Hosea 11:8b, 9a ESV). The Apostle Paul celebrates the Father's passionate patience when he says: "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8 ESV). As God initiated the evening *pas de deux* in Eden he marshaled all of heaven to conspire towards our salvation. Francis Thompson reflects the essential purpose of God's prevenient grace:

Nigh and nigh draws the chase,
With unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy;
And past those noisèd Feet
A voice comes yet more fleet—
Lo! naught contents thee, who content'st not Me!²³

As Thompson shows, man's natural bent is to run hard and fast from God. Yet, God's love impels him to pursue our helpless race. Reflecting Wesley's position, Cobb points out that "the moral and soteriological consequences we suffer from the fall consist in the human propensity of nature to evil."²⁴ Wesley's position is that it is impossible for man to make any self-initiated movement towards God, and he preached frequently on this subject, from Matthew 19:26.²⁵

The Salvation Army doctrines (specifically Articles Five and Six) teach that God reaches out to us in our sinful state. We recognize that *hamartia* has become the fatal

²³ Francis Thompson, "The Hound of Heaven," <http://jloughnan.tripod.com/hound.htm> (accessed July 9, 2009), lines 45-50.

²⁴ John B. Cobb, Jr., *Grace and Responsibility* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 83.

²⁵ "Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

chromosome in our spirit's DNA. Put another way, we all have corrupted files in our souls that cause us to malfunction, as reflected in such passages as Psalm 14:1-3 and Romans 8:19-22. Yet, even in our self-destructive bent we are not left to our own devices. The Salvation Army doctrine book teaches: "The wrath of God is purposeful and disciplinary at present, designed to lead us toward repentance."²⁶ Ultimately, God's prevenient grace is meant to grant us the liberty to choose life. "God is constantly at work by his grace to draw all people to himself. And yet response to God's grace is an act in which we are involved, in that we have been given free will and can accept or reject the new life that is offered to us."²⁷

Repentance

Once prevenient grace creates the possibility of a free will decision, *repentance* follows in the *Ordo Salutis* for those who embrace their liberty to choose life. Wesley says, "Faith is a spiritual sight of God and the things of God. Therefore, repentance is a low species of faith, i.e. a supernatural sense of an offended God."²⁸ Wesley believed conscience could be so cauterized that without supernatural intervention by the Holy Spirit, a person could be completely unaware of being subject to God's righteous wrath. Wesley represents repentance as something of a mixture of reasonable self-assessment, emotion, and attempted will to change. While repentance is incapable of changing one's position before God, it is a necessary precursor to justifying faith. Grider offers a rustic conceptualization of Wesley on this: "Repentance, a change of mind about sin that

²⁶ The Salvation Army, *Salvation Story*, 65.

²⁷ The Salvation Army, *Salvation Story*, 72.

²⁸ Cobb, *Grace and Responsibility*, 71.

includes a willingness to obey and serve God, prepares a person for the first work of grace. It is like the plowing and disking of a field, into which when the field is thus readied, the seed can then be planted.”²⁹ Albert Outler, in his essay “John Wesley: Folk Theologian,” reflects on Wesley’s insight about the disjunction of recrimination and change. He says of repentance: “*Metanoia* (change of mind) for Wesley is much less a sorrow for sin than it is an altered consciousness of one’s actual human condition. True repentance is the surrender of one’s self-sufficiency and the acknowledgement of one’s radical need of grace.”³⁰ John warns and exhorts:

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever. (I John 2:15-17)

Here John calls up recriminatory sorrow in the service of changing one’s direction. In employing words such as “love, cravings, lust, desires, and forever,” the Evangelist recognizes the pervasiveness of true repentance in that process of being saved. Thus, passionate emotion is part of the work of grace through repentance. Although eighteenth century preachers including Mr. Wesley may have wished to argue against the place of psychological trauma in sermonizing, they employed language that provoked panic as well as the fear of God. They understood that emotion was a catalyst in producing that life-changing explosive reaction of repentance. Arguably the most famous example (which in a twist of irony is nearly a polar opposite to Wesley’s theology) is Jonathan Edwards’ classic “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” with imagery that

²⁹ Grider, *Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 355.

³⁰ Oden and Longden, *Outler*, 119-120.

would bring sobriety to the most ghoulish Goth among us. Edwards' own reports describe near hysteria in the wake of this sermon.

While repentance has no power to save, it does point the penitent in the right direction. Much like tracing the waltz steps in an Arthur Murray Dance Studio, so repentance prepares both heart and life for justification's redeeming grace. Oden summarizes the work of grace in Wesley's almost believer: "By repentance we are offered the possibility of entering into a new mode of consciousness. Only then is it possible for this bondage to end coming under grace one who is finding the favor of God."³¹ Article Seven of the Salvation Army's doctrine reads: "We believe that repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, are necessary to salvation."

While in all fundamental features the Salvation Army doctrine parallels Wesley, we add the element of joy to the process. "Our repentance is a gift of grace through the Holy Spirit. Although often accompanied by sorrow, it is essentially joyful, not morbid, because it is our response to the good news of salvation."³² This is reflected in The Salvation Army's ministry as a meld of Revivalism and Social Work. As the lyricist Herbert Howard Booth expressed in a well-known Salvation Army hymn,

Grace there is my every debt to pay,
Blood to wash my every sin away,
Power to keep me spotless day by day,
For me, for me.³³

³¹ Appendix 2.

³² The Salvation Army, *Salvation Story*, 73.

³³ *The Salvation Army Song Book* (Verona, NJ: The Salvation Army National Headquarters, 1987), 303.

Today's Salvationist and potential Salvation Army converts earnestly seek happy endings to their story in this age of story. This seeking often motivates Social Work clients to move toward Salvation Army pews. I would assert that it is not unreasonable to see a parallel in Wesley's soteriology with a well constructed plot. One might see repentance these days in terms as the critical crisis moment of their plot's personal rising action. Salvation Army preachers will do well to present Wesley's order of salvation as God's overarching plot to reconcile sinners to himself. I will have much more to say about narrative in Chapter Three. For now, the plot—that is the *ordo salutis*—moves upward from repentance to God's gracious gift of justification.

Justification

John Wesley considered *justification* to be the pivotal issue of his soteriology, as have those who have followed in his theological footsteps. Cushman relates Wesley's epiphanal moment when justification by grace³⁴ via Luther's preface to Romans emblazoned God's branding on his heart:

His testimony to what happened that evening [May 24, 1738] is well-known: About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt in my heart strangely warmed. Wesley does not stop with the warmed heart. He advances to the point: I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me, that he had taken away *my* sins and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.³⁵

For Wesley, justification is the gift of God's grace through Christ alone, by the work of the Holy Spirit. He understood that man is of no consequence in his own redemption. This idea stands in radically opposition to the self-possessed post-modern arena. Wesley remains acutely relevant for post-moderns because of the tension between

³⁴ See Romans 3:23-26.

³⁵ Robert E. Cushman, *John Wesley's Experimental Divinity* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 40-41.

"the empowerment of me" and the sovereignty of God. And, in Wesley's view of justification, God has done something that could only be accomplished within the context of the Trinity. Oden states of justification:

Into this fallen human condition God sends his Son as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. God the Son on the cross is embodying an incomparable word of divine pardon, apart from any act or merit of our own, which invites us to be reconciled again to the Father and brought back into our original condition of holiness and happiness.³⁶

Oden reminds us that God provided for our salvation even when we were little Nebuchadnezzars, building images to ourselves. The Lord even protects us when we fall victim to our own animal urges, until we come to ourselves and call on His name. Michael Milton preaches: "Redemption – release from sin – comes from a loving, personal God who made us and who came to earth and lived a perfect life and died a sacrificial death. His name is Jesus, and there is no other name under heaven or in the earth whereby a person may be saved."³⁷ After all this, God puts us in a place to choose or finally reject him by the will he has freed.

I agree with the Reformers that justification comes only through faith in Jesus alone, but also believe that God graciously gives us the freedom to choose. Article Eight of The Salvation Army doctrines states: "We believe that we are justified by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and that he that believeth hath the witness in himself."³⁸ William Booth's Army may be as sensitized as any community of faith to our utter destitution of soul. The God-given right to choose constitutes much of what

³⁶ Oden, *Wesley's Christianity*, 198.

³⁷ Michael Milton, "The Absolute Necessity of a Biblical Worldview," *Preaching* 24, no. 1 (July/August 2008), 39.

³⁸ The Salvation Army, *Salvation Story*, x.

impels the Army to present and press our Revivalist agenda. Even though we so often apparently fail, we do all we can for all we can, so that some will choose Christ. Vachel Lindsay's poem cited in Chapter 1 speaks of a great parade to come of sin-sick souls washed white in the propitiatory blood of the Lamb.

Regeneration

Justification being a work done *for* us, *regeneration* is the work of the Holy Spirit done *in* us, as seen in John 3. Olin A. Curtis says: "Regeneration is the primary reorganization of a person's entire motive-life by the vital action and abiding presence of the Holy Spirit so that the ultimate motive is loyalty to Jesus Christ."³⁹ Grider describes the new birth in terms of being born from above (*anōthen*), as Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:7. Grider speaks of the newborn's spiritual resurrection, citing Paul's point in Ephesians 2:1. He states: "Regeneration is also what Paul is talking about when he writes, 'Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come' (2 Cor. 5:17, NASB)."⁴⁰ As justification changes the sinner's position before God, so does the idea of "birth" imply a change of relation with God. Of this adoption, Oden states: "Regeneration is the birthing work of God the Holy Spirit by which the pardoned sinner becomes a child of God, loving and serving God with the affections of the heart, so as to receive the Spirit of adoption by whom we are enabled to say Abba, Father."⁴¹

³⁹ Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness*, 449.

⁴⁰ Grider, *Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 363.

⁴¹ Oden, *Wesley's Christianity*, 295-296.

As Oden implies, this experience of being born again carries with it an obvious sense of God's resident presence in the new believer. The Salvation Army doctrine book teaches of this inward assurance of salvation: "Regeneration is God's work in us, the gift of the indwelling Spirit and the beginning of a life of holiness. We are alive to the presence of Christ with us, we hear his call to follow him and we experience his peace and joy in our hearts."⁴² The Salvation Army's view of regeneration echoes the ancient *Shema*: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."⁴³ (Deuteronomy 6:4-9 ESV, *ff*)

Sanctification

The beginnings of sanctification are given with regeneration. Wesley says of the spiritually newborn: "His judgment concerning *holiness* is new. He no longer judges it to be an outward thing. He sees it is the life of God in the soul; the image of God fresh stamped on the heart; an entire renewal of the mind in every temper and thought, after the likeness of Him that created it."⁴³ Regenerate sinners can sing with Fanny Crosby:

Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of Salvation, purchase of God
Born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.⁴⁴

What clarity of vision the blind hymn writer has shown! In this simple quatrain Fanny Crosby reminds the believer of her God changed position, relation, and washing unto holiness.

⁴² The Salvation Army, *Salvation Story*, 81.

⁴³ Robert W. Burtner and Robert E. Chiles, eds., *John Wesley's Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982), 171.

⁴⁴ *The Salvation Army Song Book*, 310.

Wesley's soteriology finds its summit in his doctrine of *sanctification*. Here is a definition of sanctification from the Wesley convened conferences from 1744-1747:

Sanctification is the work of the Spirit by which God by grace seeks completely to mend the broken human condition, to bring our stunted lives to fulfillment, not partially, but wholly in a genuine renewal of all the redeemed powers of the believer. Pardon is salvation begun; holiness is salvation by faith continued. The justified are pardoned and received into God's favor so that insofar as they continue in faith they are promised eternal happiness with God.⁴⁵

Holiness is the full bloom of the new creature in Christ Jesus. Mosaic Law and the old sacrificial system only served to underscore man's inability to have communion with God. Aaron's sons could not even be Law abiding the very first day on the job! Jesus fulfilled the law perfectly and by his sacrifice provided a once and for all atonement that was acceptable and accepted. The external Law now could reside in the heart. The Holy Spirit being resident, he could now be president making holiness a present possibility. Cobb states: "Wesley did not think of his view as novel. It was his most distinctive and widely recognized theological contribution – and it was attacked and praised accordingly. It has done much to shape the ethos of the Wesleyan denominations"⁴⁶ – including The Salvation Army.

Christian perfection or entire sanctification is now a universal possibility – in fact, a requirement for every true Christian. Controversially, this experience could come in one of two ways, as Cobb points out: "It could be a gradual growth in grace. [Or] Love could have its way with fewer struggles, eventually with none at all. Perfect love

⁴⁵ Oden, *Wesley's Christianity*, 327-328.

⁴⁶ Cobb, *Grace and Responsibility*, 101.

might come about instantaneously.”⁴⁷ Secondly, perfect love could come as a crisis driven process. In my own experience I have encountered those who have struggled, claiming the second blessing for years before it came to them. Others have witnessed and shown by their lives that this was their experience even as they knelt at the mercy seat for salvation. Outler notes that faith’s destination was the underlying principle: “The crucial term for Wesley was not *perfectus*, but *telios*.”⁴⁸ That energy proceeded from dependence on Christ alone. Obedient dependence on Christ is the only means of attaining sanctification. McGonigle says of Full Salvation: “The Christian’s perfection is not like the sap in a tree derived from its own roots, but like the branch that depends on its union with the trunk.”⁴⁹ What is reflected here is an understanding that the work of salvation in the believer is equally or even more pervasive than the sin principle. We may not attain perfection before our glorification, but the believer may know that experience held out by Paul to the church at Thessalonica when he exhorts: “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless as the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it” (I Thess. 5:23, 24 NIV).

Charles Wesley expresses in verse the earnest heart’s plea:

Give me a new, a perfect heart,
From doubt, and fear, and sorrow free;
The mind which was in Christ impart,
And let my spirit cleave to thee.

⁴⁷ Cobb, *Grace and Responsibility*, 109.

⁴⁸ Oden and Longden, *Outler*, 121.

⁴⁹ Herbert Boyd McGonigle, *Sufficient Saving Grace* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster: 2001), 249.

Holiness

Believers are to actively choose, as in repentance, to strive for *holiness* in acts of consecration. The Salvation Army doctrine book states: "This pilgrimage requires from us the obedience of separation from sin and consecration to the purposes of God. This is why 'obedient faith' is crucial: it makes pilgrimage possible."⁵⁰ The freedom to follow Christ in holiness has a shadow side, in that there is also the liberty to willfully walk away. The writer of Hebrews shows the shadow side: "We must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?" (Hebrews 2:1-3, ESV)⁵¹ Salvation Army soteriology largely parallels Wesley, Fletcher, Clark, Palmer, Finney and others of like mind on entire sanctification as both crisis and process.

So far, this discussion of soteriology has been framed in terms of the believer and her or his relationship to God. For the Salvation Army preacher this describes GETTING SAVED and KEEPING SAVED. But this is an incomplete paradigm without the third leg of the stool. GETTING OTHERS SAVED is the purpose statement in the old Salvation Army battle cry. Ultimately, Salvationist theology leads toward a life indelibly marked by a clear sense of mission.

⁵⁰ McGonigle, *Sufficient Grace*, 86.

⁵¹ See also John 15:1-6; 1 Corinthians 10:6-13; Hebrews 6:4-6; 10: 19-39; Jude 20-21; Revelation 2:4-5; 3:1-6, 14-22.

Heart and Soul: Embodiment of the Gospel and Kerygmatic Proclamation for this Generation

"Earthing of the Word in the world is not something that is optional; it is an indispensable characteristic of true Christian preaching."⁵²

— John R.W. Stott

This chapter has been a journey through the Bible from Scripture defined to Scripture doing, and now concludes with Scripture proclaimed. This section will make some observations in terms of Gospel proclamation, Scripture as story, and The Salvation Army's expression of Revivalist theology, particularly in terms of how we might fashion our proclamation for the next generations. The task of preachment is to portray Holy Writ in such a fashion that it is free to breath God's *ruach* into a world of dry bones and make them live again.

Gospel proclamation requires that the preacher himself be an accurate reflector and example of the Word's vitality. John Stott says: "The sincerity of a preacher has two aspects: he means what he says when in the pulpit, and he practices what he preaches when out of it. In fact, these things belong inevitably together since, as Richard Baxter put it, he that means as he speaks will surely do as he speaks."⁵³ Stott goes on: "Church members have a right to expect, however, that the Holy Spirit has done more in the life of their pastors than bring them to conversion. They naturally look for the fruit of the Spirit as well, that is, the ripening of Christian character."⁵⁴ The writer of Hebrews mounts the summit with the heroes of the faith when he concludes:

⁵² John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 145.

⁵³ Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 262.

⁵⁴ Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 263-264.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1-2)

In *As You Like It*, Shakespeare opines: “All the world’s a stage, And all the men and women are merely Players; They have their Exits and their Entrances, And one man in his time plays many parts.” The same may be true for the preacher in his role telling the Master’s Story.

Twenty-first century preachers complete an inclusio of sorts with ancient storytellers gathered fireside in the shadows of their Bedouin tents. Abram of Ur heard the voice of God and was transformed from pagan to patriarch. He told his story to his son. And, he told the story to his sons. As Abram’s story has come down to us, the God of his story has become our God. Abraham was responsible to introduce his son to I Am as well as all those under his influence. Similarly, we are responsible to make our generation know our God, until the story finishes when Jesus comes again. Scripture’s roots are oral; only later was Scripture written on stone, lambskin, papyri, paper, and the monolith of cyberspace. Ryken and Ryken preface each book of their study Bible with a section they call a chapter in the master story of the Bible. “In the Bible, the metanarrative is the story of salvation history – the events by which God worked out his plan to redeem humanity and the creation after they fell from original innocence.”⁵⁵ God’s Story that we call Scripture is meant to be told and seen and heard. A twenty-first century Revivalism remains valid for this day, just as it was for the Booths and others

⁵⁵ Leland Ryken and Philip Graham Ryken, *The Literary Study Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), xiv.

during the Victorian and post-Victorian era. But, this is only so long as our gospel proclamation is as viable in the post-modern context.

What continually emerges is that methods for communicating the timeless message must speak clearly in the currency of each generation's *koine*. This will be the focus of the literature review in the next chapter. Paul counseled his young protégé and the next generation of Salvation Army preacher:

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus: preach the word: be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. Do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (II Timothy 3:14-4:2, 5h, ESV)

The Apostle's letter to the Gentiles may be ancient, but his call to battle is as fresh as any rally cry today including GETTING SAVED, KEEPING SAVED, GETTING OTHERS SAVED.

I began this chapter lifting up Scripture as God's literal Word to us. John Wesley and others help us to understand how God's *Logos* works in us. The current generation calls to the preacher to show and tell how this lively *kerygma* works through us. Chapter 3 will review literature that helps the Salvation Army preacher to reflect on what continues to be a radical transformation in the believer.

CHAPTER 3 . LITERATURE REVIEW:

GOSPEL RHETORIC IN THE POST EVERYTHING WORLD

Rhetoric has always meant two things to literary people: (1) a writer's strategies of persuasion and (2) discourse that is ornamented and embellished with certain techniques.

– Leyland Ryken and Philip Graham Ryken, *The Literary Study Bible*

Chapter 3 turns to the central question of this thesis-project through reviewing literature pertinent to Gospel proclamation. By looking at a rhetoric of *suasion* some specific answers will emerge to the question as previously advanced in Chapter 1: “How can Salvation Army preachers adapt to their current communications environment in order to communicate the Gospel message with early day effectiveness?” The Rykens’ statement above by implication calls for new strategies to persuade and new techniques to proclaim a Revivalist Gospel in the battle for souls. Building on a foundation of Biblical and theological authority, I turn my attention to the issue of how Salvation Army preachers may meet this challenge. First, McLuhan, Hipps, and others will weigh in on the constant flux of sound, smell, taste, touch, and look of how communication happens with attendant implications. Second, Stott, Lowry, Robinson, Arthurs and others will enter into conversation in terms of an expository approach to Bible study and preaching that honors the literary forms of Scripture in this neo-oral age.

The Changing Ecology of Communication: An Opportune Maelstrom

Whenever methods or media change, the message automatically changes with them.

—Shane Hipps, *The Hidden Power of Electronic Culture*

This section takes a look at some of the literature that describes a new and future challenge for kerygmatic proclamation. It is not enough to say that a freshened Revivalist rhetoric is needed to fit the present and emerging generations. The Salvation Army founders were remarkable because they understood the power of proclamation to transform persons in their own communications environment. As their comprehension of nineteenth century communications ecology increased they were increasingly intentional in shaping their gospel. I cited examples in Chapter 1 of how William Booth marshalled such media as militant radical Revivalist oratory, brass bands, and motorcar itinerancy. Such lofty mountain peaks of literacy and oratory have long since given way in a Pompeian eruption throughout the communications landscape. Communication's fiery reshaping lava flow started gushing well before the mid-twentieth century. Marshall McLuhan might have said that this started in the West with Gutenberg. In any case, there is still no settled landscape in the church. Only the Gospel remains the same. Or, does it? Metzger writes in *Leadership Journal*: "Consider that in many churches the coffee bar has displaced the Lord's Table as the place where real community [Gospel] happens."¹

The foregoing appears to have proven Marshall McLuhan's prophetic office in communications long after his death. Lewis Lapham writes in his introduction to the 1994 edition of *Understanding Media*: "His [McLuhan's] prescience is extraordinary,

¹ Paul Louis Metzger, "Walls Do Talk," *Leadership Journal* (Fall 2009), 20-23.

and the events of the last thirty years have proved him more often right than wrong.”²

The writings of Marshall McLuhan are the most widely read and influential works on media ecology in the 20th century, but they are also the most confusing. For the purposes of this literature review, I have singled out *Understanding Media* and *The Gutenberg Galaxy* because other authors take these books as their point of departure.

In *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, McLuhan advances foundational premises for his later work. Many of his observations are particularly resonant with middle to late Boomers. By way of example, when describing the effects of the Gutenberg printing press, he asserts:

What we are studying here is the interiorization of print technology and its effect in shaping a new kind of man. De Chardin speaks of our own day when there are so many new technologies to interiorize: “Firstly, the power of invention, so rapidly intensified at the present time by the rationalized recoil of all the forces of research it is already possible speak of a forward leap of evolution”. . . . Applied knowledge has no mysteries then. It consists in segmentation of any process or any situation or any human being. One observes a human being to see what makes him tick. That is, you reduce him to a machine. Then you isolate his ruling passion, the fuel of the machine.³

In *The Gutenberg Galaxy* McLuhan describes a sort of chiastic relationship in communications: Oral (A) – Literate (B) – Mechanistic (B) – Electronic (A). He states further in *The Gutenberg Galaxy*:

It is a characteristic chiasmus that waits upon the utmost development of any process that the last phase shall show characteristics opposite to the early phases. A typical example of massive psychic chiasmus or reversal occurred when Western man fought the harder for individuality as he surrendered the idea of unique personal existence. The poets and artists moved towards the idea of impersonal process in art production in proportion as they berated the new masses

² Lewis Lapham, preface to *Understanding Media*, by Marshall McLuhan (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), xv.

³ Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (New York: The New American Library, 1969), 210.

for impersonal process in the consumption of art products. A similar and related reversal or chiasmus occurred when the consumer of popular art was invited by new art forms to become participant in the art process itself [i.e. Poe's short stories]. This was the moment of transcendence of the Gutenberg technology. The centuries old separation of senses and functions ended in a quite unexpected unity.⁴

As he finishes, or perhaps places on hold his multilayered discussion McLuhan prepares us for his media as message theme.

McLuhan, were he present today, would be well within his rights to say, "I told you so." *Understanding Media* argues again that all communication is an extension of the human nervous system (body) in one way or another. In the chapter called "Games," McLuhan states:

Any game, like any medium of information, is an extension of the individual or the group. Its effect on the group or individual is a reconfiguring of the parts of the group or individual that are not so extended. A work of art has no existence or function apart from its *effects* on human observers. And, art, like games or popular arts, and like media of communication, has the power to impose its own assumptions by setting the human community into new relationships and postures.⁵

McLuhan goes on to describe a whole waterfront of implications that include tribal versus Western societies, and Literate versus Oral ways of being and relating. He proof texts his gospel with sources from the visual and musical arts, classic literature (being particularly devoted to James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*), psychology (including Freud and many references to Carl Jung), and Greek and other mythology, even including that great prospectus on the human condition, Humpty Dumpty. While always trying to keep at arm's length to appear clinical, McLuhan does occasionally tip his hand and offer an opinion such, as when he states at the conclusion to his chapter on television: "It is

⁴ McLuhan, *Gutenberg Galaxy*, 329

⁵ McLuhan, *Gutenberg Galaxy*, 242.

the theme of this book that not even the most lucid understanding of the peculiar force of a medium can head off the ordinary closure of the senses that causes us to conform to the pattern of experience presented.”⁶ By way of illustration, he goes on to reference Pasteur’s understanding of bacteria as a defense against same. McLuhan then argues for a balancing antidote in the tension of media versus other media. In the case of television the main balancing agent is print.

Shane Hipps discusses three of McLuhan’s foundational observations about coping with laser speed changes in communication ecology. Relating one of McLuhan’s favorite Edgar Allen Poe stories, “A Descent into the Maelstrom,” Hipps reflects McLuhan’s comparison of the whirlpool with the dynamic ecology of communication. Hipps observes:

In speaking of his own rescue, the survivor in Poe’s story could just as easily be speaking for McLuhan when he says, “I became obsessed with the keenest curiosity about the whirl itself. I positively felt a wish to explore its depths, even at the sacrifice I was going to make.” McLuhan gained many of his media insights by stepping back and perceiving the broader patterns of the entire “whirl” of media rather than its individual parts. This allowed him to cooperate with the Maelstrom rather than be swept away by it. In the same way we are invited to step back and perceive the power of our media, not in an effort to stop them but, for the purpose of navigating them.⁷

Rick and Kathy Hicks recognize the maelstrom phenomena in their discussion of overlapping generations. They conclude that in navigating the communications whirlpool (including value systems), “the first step is knowledge. You need to know how values develop [how the whirlpool works].”⁸

⁶ McLuhan, *Gutenberg Galaxy*, 329.

⁷ Shane A. Hipps, *The Hidden Power of Electronic Culture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 34.

⁸ Rick and Kathy Hicks, *Boomers, Xers, and Other Strangers* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1999), 338.

Hipps also tracks along with McLuhan when he notes: "All forms of media extend or amplify some part of ourselves."⁹ He picks up on McLuhan's illustration of Narcissism when McLuhan interprets Narcissus' fatal flaw not as mere egoism but as failure to perceive his own image. Hipps states:

Narcissus became "numb" to his own extended image in the low-tech medium of the fountain. He could not perceive that the image was really just an extension of himself and became overly enamored with it, leading to his death. If he had understood that this fountain was simply a mirror reflecting his own face, Narcissus would have been able to dispel the power of the pool and gain control over it. McLuhan points out that the name Narcissus is derived from the Greek word *narcosis*, which means "numbness." Thus Narcissus suffered because he became numb to the technology that came to enslave him.¹⁰

The Hicks point to trends among the Boomer generation in a way that illustrates McLuhan's point: "As the Boomer generation got older, they kept true to some of their core values, which had to do with meeting their own personal needs, believing themselves to be very special, and not needing to play by the rules. Boomers were consumers raised to have the good life now. Their attention continued to be centered on themselves."¹¹ One could argue that there appears to be a pandemic of deadly spiritual narcosis foisted on us by the electronic media. How ironic, as McLuhan points out, that the electronic media is simply an extension of ourselves. How tragic that we are fatally mesmerized by our own image.

Thirdly, Hipps picks up again on McLuhan's affinity with Greek mythology, celebrating Perseus as a great communications problem solver. Perseus was able to defeat his enemy (perhaps an inspiration in part for McLuhan's concept of kicking the

⁹ Hipps, *Electronic Culture*, 338.

¹⁰ Hipps, *Electronic Culture*, 36.

¹¹ Hicks and Hicks, *Boomers*, 250.

electronic media straight in the electrodes) through understanding the media (his shining shield) and collaborating in the service of offing Medusa's head. Hipps states: "Perseus was aware that the mirror was an extension of himself that he could control. This understanding allowed him to survive an ordeal that had claimed the lives of countless others."¹² Keith Willhite intimates that preachers should learn from Perseus if they want to be effective expositors. He implies that they should first recognize the reflection in their shield: "Homileticians must give attention to audience receptivity if they are to be effective in preaching with relevance."¹³ Further, Willhite offers a strategy that may be helpful in lopping off Medusa's heads of ignorance:

One way to view sermonic relevance is as a link between the interpretation of the biblical passage and the application of belief, attitude, value, or behavioral change or affirmation. The Preacher should make some rhetorical move toward the audience and their needs rather than presenting "just the facts" or a colorless explanation of the meaning of the biblical passage. This perspective suggests that sermonic discourse is an interpretive task, one in which the preacher must make interpretive decisions about what is necessary for explanation and response.¹⁴

Preacher Perseus is challenged not only to exegete the text, but to exegete his listeners in order to clearly understand and manipulate the topography of communication. Further, Willhite understands that preaching is much more than doing battle with Satan (Medusa). Preaching, particularly expository preaching, can provide protection and empowerment for those who participate in the process – that is, navigating the maelstrom – whether in the pew, home, or other context.

¹² Hipps, *Electronic Culture*, 37.

¹³ Scott M. Gibson, ed., *Preaching to a Shifting Culture* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2004), 109.

¹⁴ Gibson, *Shifting Culture*, 110.

In light of McLuhan and Hipps as well as many other voices, one may legitimately ask the question: "What sort of message are we sending in the name of religion?" McLuhan's answer that "the medium is the message" brings little solace to preachers using Victorian era communications methods. He says on the one hand: "One must understand the cause of change, for without comprehending causes; the social or any psychic effects of new technology cannot be counteracted or modified."¹⁵

Conversely, McLuhan offers his own opinion about change later in that same interview when he says:

I have nothing but distaste for the process of change. As a man molded within the literate Western tradition, I do not personally cheer the dissolution of that tradition through the electric involvement of all the senses: I don't enjoy the destruction of neighborhoods by high-rises or revel in the pain of identity quest. No one could be less enthusiastic about these radical changes than myself. I am not, by temperament or conviction, a revolutionary; I would prefer a stable, changeless environment of modest services and human scale. TV and all the electric media are unraveling the entire fabric of our society, I do not take delight in its disintegration.¹⁶

And so we see McLuhan balancing his recognition of the changing ecology of communication with his own predisposition against change. Marshall McLuhan seems to be implying that as distasteful as the electronic age may be to our Boomer generation palates, if we are to be relevant, we must mold a new gospel – albeit still of Jesus Christ for a new generation in need of "old fashioned" grace.

McLuhan's metaphors above suggest that apprehending and harnessing the power of the changing ecology is altogether possible in the service of an emerging Gospel message. With his Maelstrom metaphor, he appears to propose that one should engage

¹⁵ Eric Norden, "The *Playboy* Interview: Marshall McLuhan," *Playboy*, March 1969, 31 <http://www.cs.ucdavis.edu/~rogaway/classes/188/spring07/mcluhan.pdf> (accessed August 14, 2009).

¹⁶ Norden, "Playboy Interview," 32.

the whirlpool rather than fighting, avoiding, or giving over to its destructive side.

McLuhan also intimates that numbing out or becoming enamored with our own reflection in a Narcissus-like stupor is deadly. Scot McKnight opines of iGens: "The typical emerging adult is a 'self in a castle.' That is to say, the 'self' is protected from the onslaughts of those who will attack. Never has a generation been more in tune with the self and more protective of the self."¹⁷ Or, to couch it in a more McLuhan-ish way, never has a generation been so intentionally self-numbered out. But, if one takes a courageous posture of controlled distance, the Medusa can be domesticated or done away with as necessary. Citing Matthew 9:16-17,¹⁸ Hipps states:

Jesus understood the intimate connection between the medium and message, the container and the content. He tells us a new container must bear with it new content; so also old methods will retain an old message. We must be constantly renewed and updated. But we may have missed the most dramatic point of this passage: The emphasis for Jesus is that the *wine* itself is new. Jesus came proclaiming a new message, not just new methods.¹⁹

Thus, McLuhan, Hipps, et al would call Salvationist preachers not merely to new preaching methods but, in a sense, to an entirely new gospel. Echoing Hipps' reference to Jesus: discover new wine to put in new communications wineskins. The Salvation Army's meld of Revivalism (wine) with Social Work (wineskin) is like a sailor recognizing the power of the whirlpool: if he goes with it and harnesses its power, he gets the best fishing, so to speak. The challenge for Salvation Army preachers is to embrace a unique kerygma serving the present age.

¹⁷ Scot McKnight, "The Gospel for iGens," *Leadership Journal* (Summer 2009), 20.

¹⁸ "No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak, for the patch pulls away from the cloak, and a worse tear is made. Neither is a new wine put into old wineskins; otherwise, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved." (NRSV)

¹⁹ Hipps, *Electronic Culture*, 89.

Meeting people at their point of need is an old Salvation Army axiom that still holds. We must engage the current generation on its own terms if our Gospel is to win some for Christ. Jeffrey Arthurs asserts that “cultures shift, and the art of preaching, like the art of rhetoric, demands that we adjust ideas to people so that we can adjust people to ideas.”²⁰ Graham Johnston comments in this regard, remarking on how we might engage the emerging next generations:

Christian apologist Alister McGrath identifies six points of contact for the Christian gospel that he sees within the present-day listener: a sense of unsatisfied longing, human rationality, the ordering of the world, human morality, an existential anxiety and alienation, and an awareness of finitude and mortality. Biblical communicators aren't to impose the human dilemma upon the text but to uncover the human need that exists within each passage. This taps into the idea of exercising intuitive thinking, which occurs when someone comes to accept an idea as true because it resonates with what's already known to be true.²¹

Johnston's comments are reminiscent of McLuhan's concept of the Maelstrom and possible implications of an upheaval in the ecology of communications. McLuhan concludes that the dynamic ecology of communications reflects an emerging new tribal society that is contexted in a global village. Although he conjectures about possible implications in the Narcissus and Perseus metaphors, McLuhan seems to have little to say in terms of effective communication in this new era except the challenge to “go with the flow,” so to speak, and “kick the electronic media in the electrodes.” In predicting a neo-oral age, however, McLuhan and others give some insight towards formation of a new gospel. For instance, Poe through McLuhan takes us on a voyage of discovery rather than fighting against an overpowering communications whirlpool. Johnston goes further as in the above suggesting an intuitive/inductive approach to portraying Scripture. Thus he

²⁰ Jeffrey D. Arthurs, *Preaching With Variety* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 179.

²¹ Graham M. Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 153.

asks Perseus to mentor a potentially reflective Narcissus. Johnston recognizes the oxymoron to be found in a spiritual disconnection of the “tuned in and turned on” culture McLuhan predicted. I think that Johnston picks up on this dynamic and is suggesting preachers listen to the stories of this generation rather than giving out unsolicited advice. In fact, Johnston is essentially pressing the preacher to preach narrative narratively, understanding that this generation’s ears are tuned to story even while filtering out authoritarian sounding propositions, as McGrath’s points of contact above illustrate.

McKnight states in his *Leadership Journal* article what he believes to be the new wine for iGens: “Along with Jesus’ kingdom vision, some iGens are awakened to faith by the discipleship demands of Jesus. The demand of Jesus for a life that matters and a morality that exceeds what they have experienced is radically attractive. It challenges them to their core.”²² Such a view resonates with Salvation Army preachers as they kick cultural electrodes with an alloy of Social Work and a revolutionary Revivalism. But that new wine requires a new rhetorical wineskin, the wineskin of story. McKnight cites the tendency of iGens to have such strong self-images that they are attracted to Jesus because they have an affinity for him:

If this generation likes Jesus, and if iGens have the chutzpah to think they are like Jesus, then let’s start with Jesus. We sometimes forget that the earliest Christian gospeling was telling the story of Israel’s history (Peter on Pentecost) or acknowledging God’s presence in the world (Paul in Athens) so that it led to the story of Jesus. Sometimes we forget that the first four books of the New Testament are called “gospels” because they are just that. The earliest Christian preaching, the early narratives about Jesus, grew and grew until they became the four Gospels.

²³

²² McKnight, “iGens,” 24.

²³ McKnight, “iGens,” 23.

It would appear from the foregoing that one of the most effective ways to navigate the changing ecology of communication in this generation is story. Therefore, my thesis holds: Training Salvation Army preachers how to recommunicate Biblical narrative narratively will enable them to communicate better to post-literate Salvation Army congregations.

So what is this story everyone is telling? And, how do preachers tell the brand new “old, old story?”

Story, the Medium That is the Message

Sermons built on the Scriptures will assume varied forms just as the literature of the Bible makes use of many different genres.

— Haddon Robinson

We live narratively as characters overcoming problems in a setting.

— Jeffrey Arthurs, *Preaching with Variety*

This is the age of story and it is in oral history that God has couched much of his self-revelation. At the same time, this raises the larger issue of calling for expository preaching and preaching that honors the various literary forms found throughout Scripture. John Stott says of preaching that is expository:

Scripture is far more than a collection of ancient documents in which the words of God are preserved. On the contrary, it is a living word to living people from the living God, a contemporary message for the contemporary world. God’s word is contemporary: it moves with the times and continues to address each fresh generation.²⁴

But this begs a question in the current generation: What is expository preaching? Arthurs’ *Preaching with Variety* presses preachers to consider the implications of genre sensitive preaching. How do the various literary forms found in Scripture relate to

²⁴ John R. W., Stott, *Between Two Worlds* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 100.

sermon making? Lowry, Graves, Ryken, and others will weigh in on the question: Why is biblical narrative so critical for this generation, beyond the fact that as much as two thirds of Scripture is given in the form of story?

Today's listeners – congregations or otherwise – want an authentic representation, an accurate and authoritative exposition of Scripture. Haddon Robinson defines expository preaching as follows:

Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers.²⁵

Preaching that is expository – that reflects God's authoritative truth and interprets that truth for this generation's plots in this generation's setting – has the most potential for effective proclamation.

Whilst our responsibility as preachers is to present God's Word in the clearest fashion to any who will listen, the preacher her/himself must understand that we are a sort of new wineskin carrying new wine in this generation. Stott agrees with Robinson and places an even greater onus on the preacher:

Exposition refers to the content of the sermon (biblical truth) rather than its style (a running commentary). To expound Scripture is to bring out of the text what is there and expose it to view. Our responsibility as expositors is to open it up in such a way that it speaks its message clearly, plainly, accurately, relevantly, without addition, subtraction or falsification.²⁶

In the opening up of Scripture the process includes self-exegesis and willingness to change. How ironic that so often the text is a jumping off point for the preacher's program, however laudable. Robinson states: "Expositors think in three areas. First, as

²⁵ Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 21.

²⁶ Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 125, 126.

exegetes, we struggle with the meanings of the biblical writer. Then as people of God, we wrestle with how God wants to change us. Finally, as preachers, we ponder what God wants to say to the congregation through us.”²⁷ John Koessler sees the preaching office as a prophetic office. Following Robinson and Stott’s lead, he says in an article celebrating the pastoral ministry of Helmut Thielicke in Stuttgart during the final days of WWII:

When we analyze the text, we speak to the text on behalf of our audience. We ask the text the questions our people would ask. Then we speak to the audience on behalf of the text, on behalf of God. Instead of prophets standing against the people, we, as shepherds, are called to stand with them as fellow strugglers in need of God’s grace.²⁸

For shepherds in this generation there is yet a divide to be navigated between the text and Thielicke’s sheep. This separation is between the grammatical-historical setting of the ancient biblical writer and the application of God’s message to the human heart. The bridge over often troubled waters that separates the two contexts in expository preaching is the literary form of a given text.

My parents’ church, which I attended from gestation through college, was blessed with newly graduated seminarians as senior pastors every three years. Without exception we heard Greek and Hebrew lexicology and expounding of deep unfathomable truth each and every Sunday. As a youngster I distinctly remember being quizzical about each successive pastor. How could someone speak so clearly and soothingly to my often sickly mother when he visited at our home and then suddenly don an indiscernible

²⁷ Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 27.

²⁸ John Koessler, “The Mediating Prophet,” *Leadership Journal* 30, No. 2 (Summer 2009), 63.

semantic from the pulpit that I had no hope to decipher? Thomas Long speaks to a connection that so many, including these gifted young pastors, have missed:

When we ask ourselves what a text means, we are not searching for the *idea* of the text. We are trying to discover its total impact upon a reader- and about a text that works together to create that impact. We may casually speak of the form and the content of a text as if they were two separate realities, but if “content” is used as a synonym for “meaning,” the form must be seen as a vital part of the content. Perhaps it would be more accurate to speak of the *form of the content*.²⁹

Sidney Greidanus agrees with Long’s statement, and observes regarding creative sermon making: “Although not everyone agrees that the form of the text should be carried through in the sermon, the attempt to do so opens up some exciting possibilities, provided preachers are sensitive to the canonical context of these forms.”³⁰

It is important to understand that God’s means and method of transmitting his message cannot be ignored in the service of reflecting his holiness and passionate love for mankind. James Bailey and Lyle Vander Broek underscore the critical nature of literary form as an equal partner in hermeneutics when they say: “It is important for interpreters of the New Testament [and Old Testament] to understand the literary forms found there because there is almost always a relationship between a literary form and the meaning conveyed.”³¹ David Jackman states:

The expositor must work with the literary distinctives as God has given them and not try to iron them out into a standard three-point sermon. We will learn to value the intricate arguments and verbal precision of a letter, the twist in a parable, the punch line of a gospel pronouncement story, the provocation of a wisdom saying,

²⁹ Thomas G. Long, *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 12-13.

³⁰ Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 19.

³¹ James L. Bailey and Lyle D. Vander Broek, *Literary Forms in the New Testament* (Louisville: Westminster, 1992), 14.

the turning point of a narrative, the multiple fulfillments of a prophecy, or the emotive, affective ingredients of a poem.³²

Returning to Robinson's definition of expository preaching, it is clear that in forming a kerygmatic proclamation for this generation, respect for the literary forms in Scripture is an equal partner if one is to be true to God's Word. As Long points out, that is not to say that the expositor must create sermons in some sort of slavish fashion. Jeffrey Arthurs advocates sensitivity to the Bible as literature in sermon making that is accurate, vital, and creative for these days:

We communicate with a different audience than the original audience, and sermons must take into account the needs of the current listeners. The key to genre sensitive preaching is to replicate the impact of the text, not its exact techniques, although technique is the best place to start. A narrative text naturally lends itself to a narrative sermon; a poetic text structured with parallelism naturally lends itself to restatement. But, no law tells us that we must use narrative or restatement. We have freedom.³³

However the preacher chooses to exercise her freedom, Mike Graves reminds us that "form-sensitive preaching takes seriously the rhetorical impact of a text."³⁴

Consider Graves, Arthurs and others above in the context of McLuhan's neo-oral age. Preaching biblical narrative narratively would appear to have come of age. For starters, as much as two thirds of the Bible is narrative of one type or another. Secondly and perhaps much more importantly, "when Jesus preached, he told stories."³⁵ Furthermore, Scripture is replete with stories of every shape and description. The Rykens include more than forty classifications of Bible stories in the glossary section of their

³² Haddon W Robinson and Craig Brian Larson, *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 229.

³³ Arthurs, *Preaching with Variety*, 28.

³⁴ Mike Graves, *The Sermon as Symphony* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1997), 17.

³⁵ Haddon W. and Torrey W. Robinson, *It's All How You Tell It* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 12.

study bible.³⁶ Biblical narrative now takes center stage in this section and in the thesis-project. Leland Ryken says of story: "Narrative is the dominant form in the Bible. Its prominence is well captured in Amos Wilder's oft quoted statement that 'the narrative mode is uniquely important in Christianity.'" What this means to readers of the Bible is that the more they know about how stories work, the more they will enjoy and understand vast portions of the Bible."³⁷ In this section I will work to unpack what defines biblical narrative, offer some thoughts in terms of preaching narrative and how that informs this thesis.

Ryken further helps us understand this when he says:

The power of story as a literary form [how it works] is its uncanny ability to involve us in what is happening. Storytellers put us on the scene and in the middle of an action. They pluck us out of our own time and place and put us into another time and place. As Norman Perrin puts it, "The natural function of narrative is to help the reader hear the voices, take part in the action, get involved in the plot." The more vividly storytellers portray the action and characters and settings, the more compelling is their sway over our attention, as the biblical storytellers knew so well.³⁸

Knowing what we do about the current ecology of communications helps us to further understand how and why story works. This raises two further questions: what are the components of story, and how do we make sermons that take rhetorical advantage of narrative in this age of neo-orality?

The component parts of a narrative are setting, character, and plot. Many would also include point of view. Arthurs defines biblical narrative as "a historically accurate,

³⁶ Leland and Ryken, *Literary Study Bible* 1883ff. Story definitions: adventure, annunciation, apocalypse, ascension, battle, biography, birth, calling, conflict/controversy, conquest, conversion, crime and punishment, docudrama, drama, encounter, epic, exile, Gospel, hero, horror, idyll, journey, love, miracle, parable, passion, pronouncement, quest, recognition, reform, rescue, resurrection, return, revenge, origins, succession, temptation, tragedy, transformation, travel, vocation, witness. What is this long list?

³⁷ Leland Ryken, *How to Read the Bible as Literature* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 33.

³⁸ Ryken, *The Bible as Literature*, 34.

artistically sophisticated account of persons and actions in a setting designed to reveal God and edify the reader.”³⁹

First, we will explore the component of setting. Mike Graves underscores the place of setting in his discussion of parables:

Jesus’ parables are full of surprises couched within the familiar. His stories are rooted in concrete life experiences, and yet those experiences get turned upside down. The parabolic story begins so innocently. The scene is familiar, and “everything is so simple and clear that a child can understand.” But then, without warning, Jesus’ listeners are shocked at the conclusions.⁴⁰

Ryken agrees with Graves on the importance of familiarity of the physical setting or place in Biblical story. There is often an illusion or direct reference to the symbolic meaning of the place such as Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac on Moriah. Taking a close look at the importance of setting in narratives in the Hebrew Scriptures, Shimon Bar-Efrat notes the importance of time and cultural elements. In the narrative setting as it brings the setting to life: “biblical narratives bring the bustle of life before us and are imbued with movement and activity. Because they are dramatic, they have recourse primarily to the dimension of time in order to facilitate the development of the plot, and space is only of secondary importance for them.”⁴¹ Richard Pratt chimes in on setting when he asserts that “scenes [setting] may be defined as batches of closely related circumstances, actions, and characters that form the basic building blocks of Old Testament stories.”⁴² Ryken sums up the setting and its function:

³⁹ Arthurs, *Preaching with Variety*, 64.

⁴⁰ Mike Graves, *The Sermon as Symphony* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1997), 43.

⁴¹ Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 196.

⁴² Richard L. Pratt, Jr., *He Gave us Stories* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1993),

The setting of a story is simultaneously physical, temporal, and cultural. The physical scenes that storytellers build into their stories serve several functions. They are usually a necessary background for understanding the action that occurs within them. They are of course an important part of the concrete vividness by which storytellers enable their readers to enter fully into the experience of a story. They may be an important part of the identity of a character.⁴³

Now that the scene is set, characters are needed. Shakespeare is famous for referring to life as a stage and all of us as actors on that stage. Robert Alter states:

Character can be revealed through the report of actions, through appearance, gestures, posture, costume; through one character's comments on another; through direct speech by the character; through inward speech, either summarized or quoted as interior monologue; or through statements by the narrator about the attitudes and intentions of the personages, which may come either as flat assertions or motivated explanations.⁴⁴

The assertions and explanations above reveal the purpose of characterization in biblical narrative. Characterization is the primary conduit through which the biblical storyteller channels his message. Bar-Efrat further states, "A character in a work of literature is merely the sum of the means used in the description. Whereas in real life an individual exists whether or not someone bothers to describe him or her, in a work of literature it is the portrayal which creates the character."⁴⁵ It is in this way that shepherd boys become kings and homeless undocumented widows become messianic ancestors.

The third part of story is plot, and related to plot is the narrator's point of view. Independent of a plot, setting and characterization are rather like a train set on tracks only long enough to accommodate the train cars. There simply is no destination. The Rykens offer a helpful definition of plot:

⁴³ Pratt, *He Gave Us Stories*, 35.

⁴⁴ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 116-117.

⁴⁵ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 48.

The essence of plot is one or more conflicts that reach resolution and closure by the end of the story. Plot conflicts can pit the protagonist against the environment, other characters, the supernatural, or himself or herself. The sequence of a plot usually unfolds according to the following phases: exposition (background information); inciting moment/force/incident; rising action; turning point (the point from which, in retrospect, we can see how the action will be eventually be resolved, even though we do not know the details); further complication; denouement (tying up of loose ends).⁴⁶

It is vitally important to recognize not only what happens, but also how the story is told or the vantage from which the narrative is presented. Arthurs describes the point of view as “the perspective or attitude from which a story is told.”⁴⁷ Point of view is pervasive and critical to hermeneutic as well as homiletic. Hence we have four Gospels, and both Chronicles and Kings.

Boomers and ensuing generations may not find it strange that so much of the Bible is story. But, as Thomas Long points out, this is not historically normative:

Religions do not necessarily depend upon narrative to convey their thought. Lists of precepts, thematic essays, systematic theologies, riddles, or even probing and open-ended questions are among the literary options available to teachers of religion. Stories are, in some ways, notoriously ambiguous and inefficient devices for conveying truth, and it is a puzzle worth pondering that narrative is the dominant form of choice for biblical writers.⁴⁸

Long points out that Scripture does not even have a word for story. Yet in the neo-oral era it is narrative, preached narratively, that has the best opportunity to be heard especially among the authority-craving iGens. Mark Batterson states: “You’ve got to be a good communicator, and you’ve got to utilize story and illustration and find ways to

⁴⁶ Ryken and Ryken, *Literary Study Bible*, 1894.

⁴⁷ Arthurs, *Preaching with Variety*, 78.

⁴⁸ Long, *Preaching and Literary Forms*, 66.

mix it up.”⁴⁹ D.A. Carson observes:

The current focus on narrative preaching has rightly broadened the older emphasis on discourse passages from the Bible. If it helps us better handle the genres of Scripture faithfully and responsibly, it will be to the good. If it merely tips us from one cultural preference to another, we have not gained anything. Indeed, because narrative is intrinsically more hermeneutically “open” than discourse, the move may merely contribute toward moving us away from truth.⁵⁰

Carson rightly notes a balanced view of genre sensitive narrative preaching. I have included his thoughts on preaching narrative as an important cautionary. One of the great pitfalls of preaching narrative is propensity towards just telling a story. For the genuine expository preacher nothing could be further from the truth. Narrative preaching involves an accurate entry into the life of the story you are portraying, so that God’s truth becomes clear and incontrovertible. While there is freedom to be creative, Abraham and the modern listener must still keep their appointment on Mount Moriah.

Perhaps the best reason of all to embrace narrative and an inductive approach to its portrayal is that this was Jesus’ most recorded style of preaching. Simply put, Jesus told stories. Lewis and Lewis offer a further rationale for preaching narratively:

Narrative is a basic medium of common sense that can provide perception, judgment, and knowledge. Narrative truth assumes a type of knowledge different from the knowledge produced within and sanctioned by rational argument. Narrative is the received wisdom of the community and is contrasted to the “elitist” and /or “technical” knowledge of the academic establishment. **Narrative makes sense of experience.** Narrative logic establishes a transparent realism—what everyone knows, what any sensible person would do. Narrative logic worked for Jesus, even with His enemies.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Michael Duduit, “Preaching to the De-Churched: An Interview with Mark Batterson,” *Preaching* 25, no. 2 (2009), 11.

⁵⁰ D.A. Carson, “Challenges for 21st Century Preaching,” *Preaching* 23, no. 6 (May/June 2008), 23.

⁵¹ Ralph L. and Gregg Lewis, *Learning to Preach Like Jesus* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), 106. Bolded print mine.

Before I cite some suggestions on sermon making in a narrative style I want to cite two additional advocates for the preaching in this way. Haddon and Torrey Robinson suggest that: “The authors of many Old Testament books were accomplished storytellers, and they were also theologians. They used their stories to point people to God. The narratives in the Bible are not simply tales to tell children before they get tucked into bed at night; they are superbly crafted theology.”⁵² Sidney Greidanus highlights several advantages to be found in preaching narrative in a narrative style:

First, by using the same form as the text, one acknowledges the significance of the biblical form and is less likely to distort the text. Another advantage of the narrative form is that it provides the sermon almost automatically with forward movement and thus creates interest. A third advantage is that it allows the hearers to be involved more holistically, to live *into* the message with their imagination rather than merely to reflect on it intellectually. A fourth advantage is that narrative form communicates implicitly rather than explicitly, obliquely rather than directly. By communicating indirectly, the narrative form not only addresses the whole person but is also able to get around defenses and communicate where the didactic form would fail.⁵³

Moving from narrative text to sermon, Fred Craddock says: “Good storytelling speaks for the congregation and evokes their own stories. Good preaching is an act of the people.”⁵⁴

Thomas Long states on the rhetoric of story:

What does a story do to a reader? The answers are virtually infinite. At the risk of oversimplification, though, it can be said that a good story creates its impact in one of two ways: (1) by making the reader one of the characters or (2) by making a claim concerning the nature of life, a claim about which the reader must make a decision.⁵⁵

12. ⁵² Haddon W, and Torrey W. Robinson, *It's All in How You Tell It* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003),

⁵³ Greidanus, *Modern Preacher*, 151-152.

⁵⁴ Fred Craddock in Robinson and Larson, *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching*, 492.

⁵⁵ Long, *Preaching and Literary Forms*, 74. Bolded print mine.

Long's last point in the service of provoking a decision particularly resonates with Salvation Army Revivalism.

Eugene Lowry has framed one particularly useful approach to narrative sermon making in his book *The Homiletical Plot*. It is important to note that Lowry would insist on the importance of the hard work of exegesis, including historical-cultural, and grammatical study, as well as attention to form. Lowry suggests this process for narrative sermon making:

It is helpful to think of sequence rather than structure. I propose five basic sequential stages to a typical sermonic process—a plot. The stages are: 1) upsetting the equilibrium, 2) analyzing the discrepancy, 3) disclosing the clue to resolution, 4) experiencing the gospel, and 5) anticipating the consequences. My students have found it helpful to remember these steps with the following abbreviations: 1) Oops; 2) Ugh; 3) Aha; 4) Whee; and 5) Yeah. Note that the plot line is forward moving, unlike the outline, which is a vertically imaged static structure. The sermonic plot is time oriented – an event in history with a beginning, and an ending. We deal not with parts of a whole but with stages of a sequence.⁵⁶

Lowry's approach is particularly appealing to this generation in its inductive approach to data gathering and decision making. As Jeffrey Arthurs comments, "Biblical narrative, then, is not only history told as story, it serves the intent of the author in revealing God and as it does so, it teaches, moves, and delights."⁵⁷

Having cited and explained some of the important literature that informs this thesis project, Chapter 4 will describe my project that demonstrates the effectiveness of preaching narrative narratively in this generation.

⁵⁶ Eugene L. Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot* (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 2001), 26.

⁵⁷ Arthurs, *Preaching with Variety*, 68.

CHAPTER 4 PROJECT DESIGN

And all who heard it [the story] wondered at what the shepherds told them.

– Luke 2:18 (ESV)

This chapter will review the Project Design component of the larger thesis-project. But first, here is a recapitulation of the journey thus far. Chapter 1 of this thesis-project argued that a style of preaching stuck in Victorian rhetorical convention is no longer effective in the present mix of generations. Chapter 2 demonstrated that the Salvation Army's unique theology melds Revivalism and Social Work. The Army's theology and praxis remain malleable enough to serve the present age. The grace we reflect in our Social Work outreach is easily understood by those whom we serve, our membership, volunteers and the general public. But our Bible based Revivalism suffers from a Biblical illiteracy that is pervasive among nearly all socio-economic demographics. This can be illustrated by the following three illustrations found in Brian Lowry's blog, Southern Nazarene College's citation of Jay Leno, and *The Weekly Standard* for May 23, 2005. In his blog for January 9, 2009 at ChristianityToday.com Brian Lowery states:

Of all the material I gather for the roundup, I'm almost always most intrigued by the top-five search items. I go to Google Trends, find the day's date, and just like that, I know what people are obsessing over as they begin their Friday. Today's top-five list was a bit unexpected: 1. John 3:16, 2. Mary Lynn Rajs kub, 3. Windows 7 beta download, 4. All inclusive vacations, 5. Ana Ortiz.¹

¹ Brian Lowery "Biblical Literacy Reaches New Low," *Christianity Today.com* January 9, 2009, 1 http://www.outofur.com./archives/2009/01/biblical_litera.html (accessed December 8, 2010).

Southern Nazarene University offers the following from comedian Jay Leno: “During the taping of one of his television shows, Leno moved through his audience asking people what they knew about the Bible. Name one of the Ten Commandments, he said. God helps those who help themselves? someone ventured. Name one of the apostles, Leno told them. No one could.”² Conservative periodical *The Weekly Standard*, citing the Bible Literacy Project stated: “Go beyond rudimentary and you find that very few American students have the level of Bible knowledge that high-school English teachers regard as basic to a good education.”³ Thus Salvation Army kerygmatic proclamation in this generation calls for a fresh re-communication of the Gospel that is responsive to folks who get their information from the web, TV, or an education system that appears to have distanced itself from the Bible even as literature.

Chapter 3 described the swirling maelstrom that operates in a constantly changing ecology of communication. Even words such as “web,” “face-book,” and “twitter” are like McLuhan neologisms and prophecies come to fruition. This poses the question: How can Salvation Army preachers adapt to the current communications environment in order to communicate the Gospel message with early day effectiveness? My answer and thesis is: By training Salvation Army preachers how to re-communicate Biblical narrative narratively, they will better communicate to post-literate Salvation Army congregations.

One way to test this thesis is to interact directly with a Salvation Army congregation/audience. Members of the Nashua, New Hampshire Salvation Army Corps

² Clayton Hardiman, “How Come Intro to Bible is required at SNU?” Bethany, OK: Southern Nazarene University <http://home.snu.edu/~hculbert/literacy.htm> (accessed December 10, 2010).

³ David Gelernter, “Biblical Illiteracy in America,” *WeeklyStandard.com*. May 23, 2005. 8. <http://www.weeklystandard.com/print/Content/Public/Articles/000/0...> (accessed December 8, 2010).

represent the customers/consumers formerly known as parishioners. Labeling people who attend our worship as “customers/consumers” is strange to Boomer ears. Like McLuhan, who disapproves of change generally, I find this sort of labeling most offensive.

Everything in my understanding of Gospel, tradition, experience, and reason reminds me that worship is not “in the dock,” but instead is humanity falling prostrate at Jesus’ feet acknowledging our position before an offended God. But, this is a generation that “tries out” a “product” and “buys into” or rejects what is being “sold” with its own brand of arrogant pride. Even the most current generation, which longs to be discipled, first has to have Jesus prove himself to them, as Scot McKnight demonstrated in his *Leadership Journal* article cited in Chapter 3. A hopeful sign of the Salvation Army’s efforts to negotiate the current context is that the Salvation Army has changed its designation of worship attendees from “Soldiers” (Senior and Junior) and “Friends” to “Corps Members” and “Visitors.” While this may seem a minor accommodation, the change in language recognizes TSA’s need to change its rhetoric at some level.

The Thesis-Project

My project had three stages. First, I conducted a Feed Forward Exercise (Appendix 3) to collect data. This was Stage 1. Stage 2 was a series of four first person narrative sermons (Appendix 5). Stage 3, a Feed Back Survey (Appendix 4), completed the project. The survey questions were meant to discover what sort of preaching style was most likely to connect with this congregation/audience at the Salvation Army in Nashua, New Hampshire. The remainder of Chapter 4 details the project design. The project from which this thesis-project grew was initially conducted as a post-residency

assignment after the first year of the Preaching the Literary Forms of the Bible track at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary's Doctor of Ministry program.

How the Project Emerged

This project is the result of a personal rhetorical fishing expedition. The Robinsons provide a very apt description of where I was in 2005 when this project began to take shape:

His sermons resembled rows and rows of Chinese egg rolls. They were nourishing enough, but they all looked the same. He had used the same mold for over twenty years with little variety except for the subject matter. His sermons from the Psalms differed little from those out of Revelation. It was this unrelenting sameness that prompted him to say, "I am bored, very bored, with my own preaching."⁴

If I was weary of my own listless pulpitering, how much more so were those dear saints who bore or snored with me over the years? The thesis-project's surveys and first person narrative preaching series were meant to bring to the surface ways to connect effectively from the pulpit. I wanted to create a new approach to preaching – one that would "work" in terms of bringing persons to faith and personal holiness, and by extension help to build a vital faith community. I felt that *story* might be a key in reaching these goals.

Looking back on the genesis of this Thesis, I see now that the theme of story continually raised itself. People really are tuned in to story. This is evident in responses to both of the surveys I administered – the feed forward and feedback surveys. For instance, one response to the Feed Forward Survey said of the Gospel of Luke: "Exploring the people's lives [their personal stories] would make this Gospel more meaningful to me. Why were tax collectors so terrible and such?" Story-telling

⁴ Haddon W. and Torrey W. Robinson, *It's All In How You Tell It* (Grand Rapids, Baker: 2003), 10.

techniques that diverged from conventional Salvation Army preaching style appeared to help listeners connect with the narrative. I referred to Luke the Gospeler by the pseudonym "Doc Lukas," and I used a costume and props to portray the character. This made enough of an impression that one respondent noted that Doc Lukas "made us realize the many attributes of Jesus and how he can relate to our every thought, deed, hurt, joy, etc." Another person wanted to know more about "Luke's background" – that is, Luke's own life story. Yet another person felt that young people need to "know about Jesus' life." Such comments show that our parishioners want to find a happy ending to their own personal dramas in God's story as found in Biblical narrative.

The Project Proper

The three-stage project was implemented during October and November of 2005. Survey participants were selected from regular attendees at the Nashua Corps. Of the ten invited to participate, nine agreed to be part of the process. Average regular attendance at Sunday services during that period was forty-five, which exceeded the average attendance of thirty across the Northern New England Division, which is comprised of twenty-eight Corps (local Salvation Army congregations). Participants in the surveys represented a sample of twenty percent of those who regularly attended worship at the Nashua Corps.

Persons surveyed (the same test group for both the Feed Forward and Feed Back) were active in the congregation as full-fledged Salvation Army Corps Members. The sample included people of various age groups, from teens through seventy-somethings. The professions of this group who participated included clergy, high school student,

college student, fire fighter, scientist, psychiatric nurse, and blue collar occupations. I chose to include an individual with poor writing skills because his input was valid outside of any education based skill set. The heterogeneous mixture of professions and socio-economics is common among those who worship in The Salvation Army. In this group are also folks who range in their faith journey from those who recently have come to faith, to others who have walked with Christ for more than sixty years.

Stage 1: Feed Forward Survey

As stated above, this project was very general at first. I attempted to get behind the ears and eyes of this congregation to be more effective in re-communicating the Gospel to them. The remarks with which I introduced the Feed Forward Survey read in part as follows:

While this short survey is in partial requirement of a Doctor of Ministries course, my intention is twofold: First, what do we think about this particular Gospel [Luke] and what difference does that knowledge make in our day to day living? And, second, in what ways should these impressions impact our corporate worship? Hopefully, as a result of our working together, you and I will be inspired and challenged by Luke and changed through the Holy Spirit.⁵

I spoke to the potential participants individually to keep them from collaborating with each other. I did not want them to speak to any of the other participants about any of the questions, so that their Feed Forward responses would be spontaneous and their own.

The Feed Forward Survey was designed to test existing comprehension of Luke's Gospel. I asked "open ended" questions, so the survey participants had to call on their general knowledge of Luke. In some cases, prompts called for the survey respondent to share their general knowledge of this Gospel:

⁵ Appendix 3.

- “When I think of the Gospel of Luke, the following impressions and memories come to mind.”
- “The Gospel of Luke is mainly about?”
- “Sermons on this Gospel should?”

The responses to the Feed Forward Survey were sort of a mixed bag. At least one respondent left the questions blank for general knowledge questions 1-7. The blank responses were scattered among the various participants.

I also wanted to discover how or if the preaching to which this Salvation Army congregation is regularly accustomed connects with their spiritual experience and everyday living. Questions 3 through 7 on the Feed Forward survey gave opportunity to comment on sermon making. These prompts included:

- “Sermons on this Gospel should?”
- “[Blank] would make this Gospel more meaningful to me,”
- “[Blank] should be included/excluded from the Holiness Meeting [Morning Worship] to make this book mean something for my life”
- “The young people need?”
- “The older folks need?”

I would note that the only question everyone answered was about the needs of young people. I was hoping to find out what sort of sermon making would most connect with or resonate with their real life issues.

Every one of the eight respondents answered questions 8 through 10, which had to do with the general setting. This included the participant with the most limited writing skills. The eight who responded to the Feed Forward Survey were a clergy person, a

senior citizen, a college student, a retired firefighter, a scientist, a psychiatric nurse, a custodian, and a youth worker. Figure 1 depicts the level of participation in the Feed Forward Survey.

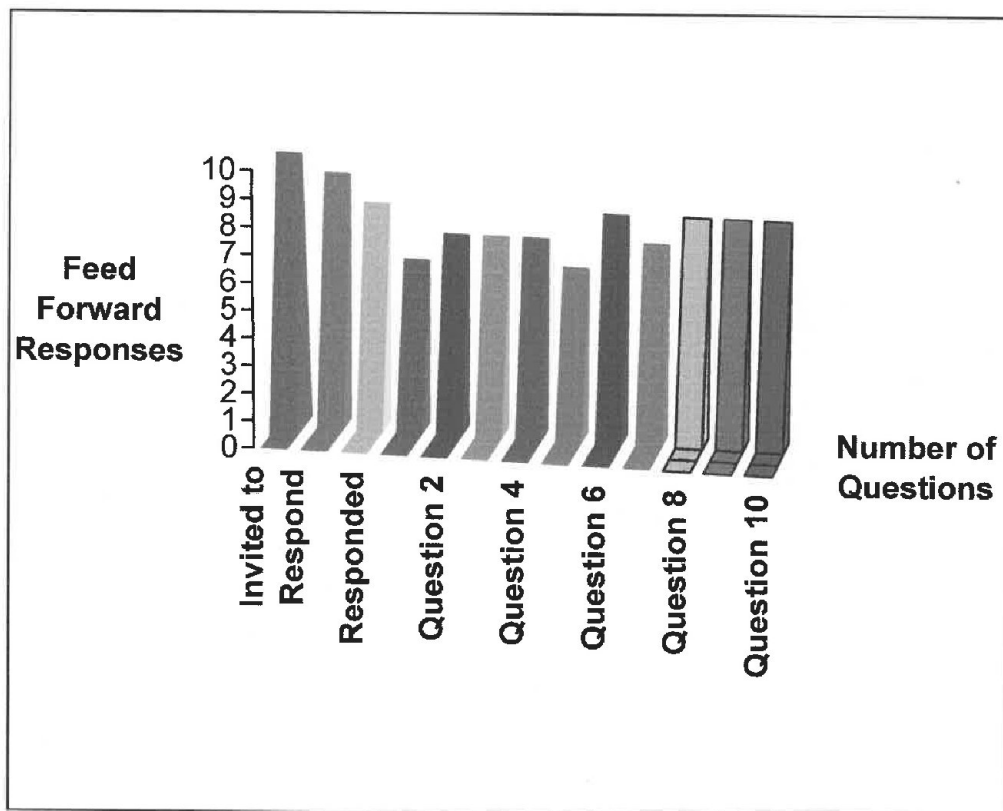


Figure 1. Participation in Feed Forward Survey.

Two themes emerged in the results of the survey. First, the sense that story is the language of this congregation kept coming to the surface like cream on whole milk. For example, Question 1 in the Feed Forward survey asked about general impressions of Luke's Gospel. Respondent 3 stated: "Jesus is shown caring for all people no matter

what their status in society.”⁶ In other words, this respondent’s Jesus is God engaged in the drama of a person’s life regardless of their place in the social “food chain.”

I must note that empirical research is a very limited part of my professional skill set. More skilled questions might have elicited more precise responses, but even so, the responses I received kept coming back to the issue of story. Across the board, responses reflected an interest in Jesus’ story and how that impacted their own story. For example, Question 2 about the principal theme of Luke elicited these responses: “My Jesus in his humanness,” and “The life of Christ from birth, as a child, a young man, man, and savior for all.”⁷ Other examples can be found in Appendix 2 Feed Forward Survey which lists all the responses. Seventy-five per cent of the Feed Forward respondents referenced story, as Figure 2 illustrates.

Permit me to repeat that this survey was not designed initially to prove the thesis statement about narrative preaching. That said, question ten of the Feed Forward Survey (What is the most important thing about worship for me?) still came back with six of eight inputs that centered on God’s participation in their own story. Only Respondent 6 answered with “Exhortational Preaching.” More representative of the sample was Respondent 7 who stated: “It’s my time to reflect what God has done for me!” Or, this is my time to think about how God impacts the drama of my life’s story. In Question 2 which asks what the participants believed to be the principal theme(s) in the Gospel of Luke. Responses such as the following reflect at the very least a predisposition towards narrative communication in my mind:

- “Jesus’ life from conception to ascension”

⁶ Appendix II3.

⁷ Appendix 3.

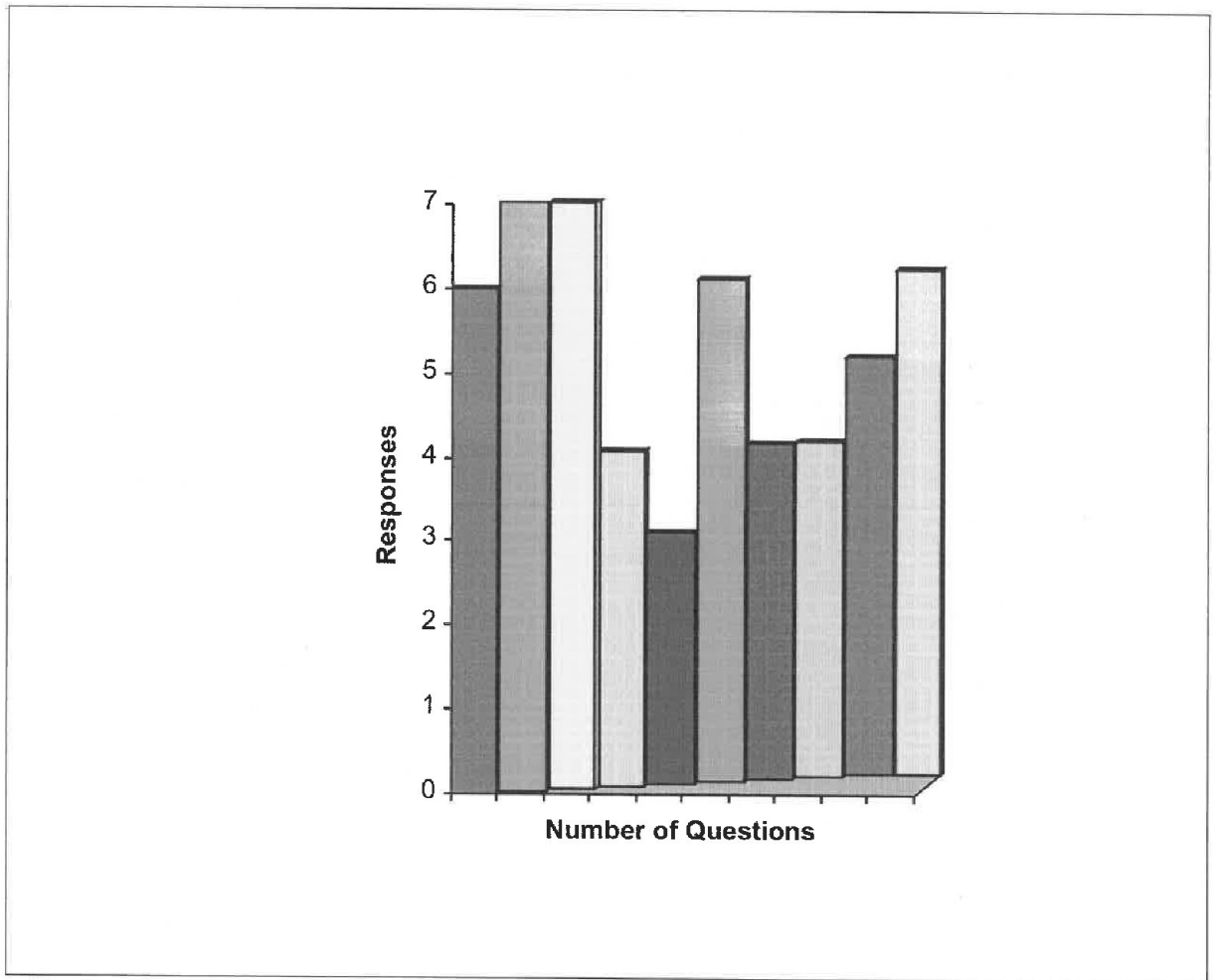


Figure 2. Narrative Oriented Responses.

- “The Gospel of Luke is mainly about the life and times of Jesus. From when John the Baptist was conceived through Jesus’ accession to heaven.”
- “The life of Christ – His humanity as the Son of Man”
- “A running theme throughout Luke is Jesus’ compassion for Gentile, Samaritans, women, children, tax collectors, sinners, and other outcasts”
- “The life of Christ from birth, as a child, a young man, man and savior for all.”

Stage 2: The Sermon Series

In Stage 2, I preached a series of four first person narrative sermons. Each message was expository, faithful to the literary form, and true to the big idea of the passage. The Gospel of Luke's emphasis on social justice, women and children and other 'out group' issues, his descriptive style including parables is consonant with the Salvation Army point of view, even in a rapidly changing communications and socio-political milieu. I. Howard Marshall states in the introduction to his commentary on Luke:

He wrote for people at some remove from the ministry of Jesus, both in geography and in time, and his task was to provide them with such an account of the story of Jesus as would enable them to see that the story with which they had already become partially acquainted was a reliable basis for their faith. Thus his work was probably intended for members of the church, but it could at the same time be used evangelistically, and its outward form strongly suggests that such a wider audience was in view.⁸

Luke wrote to people like us: materialistic, open to spirituality, making an idol of tolerance, rejecting of ultimate authority and truth, busy, efficient. I remember walking through ancient Ephesus and Thessalonica and being struck by the affinity I had with the remains of their work-a-day world: shops, theaters, libraries, even public restrooms. The Rykens write in their introduction to Luke: "He writes for the benefit of fellow Gentiles who want and need to know Jesus."⁹ Paul's epistles offer a more fulsome definition of Gentile culture, the attitudes and actions of which continue to be reflected in western thinking and action. The *Holman Bible Handbook* reflects an affinity with the Salvation Army perspective when it states: "Luke drew attention to the poor, tax collectors, sinners, and women since these neglected groups indicate the comprehensive nature of God's

⁸ I. Howard Marshall and W. Ward Gasque, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 35.

⁹ Leland and Philip Graham Ryken, *The Literary Study Bible* (Wheaton, Crossway Bibles: 2007), 1533.

salvation. The makeup of God's new community includes all who come in faith and repentance to Christ."¹⁰ These so-called "out-groups" have been an Army focus from the beginning.

There is great affinity between the Army's mission and method and many of Luke's primary themes. For instance, many theologians consider his central theme to be soteriology as reflected by the following quotation from Jesus at the house of Zacchaeus: "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10, ESV). Theologians such as Marshall, Darrell Bock, and Joel Green appear to agree. Bock states:

Jesus comments on what has just come to pass: salvation has come to Zacchaeus and his house. *Soteria* describes the restored relationship that one has with God when he delivers. This deliverance accompanies Jesus' visit and is made possible by Zacchaeus's response to the invitation. Zacchaeus's vocation does not cancel his potential access to God. This is the type of person Jesus seeks to reach. Jesus concludes with a statement of mission that explains his declaration of salvation. Zacchaeus's transformation represents a fulfillment of Jesus' call.¹¹

The Salvation Army is called to a ministry of proclamation, particularly to many of the "out groups" on which Luke centers in his Gospel, and that fact intrigued me. Green offers the following concluding comment about Jesus and Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10:

Having spoken on Zacchaeus' behalf, vindicating him before his townspeople, Jesus goes on to defend his own coming to Zacchaeus' house. He [Jesus] was indicted for having table fellowship with those toll collectors and sinners who had responded positively to his message; there, he insisted that his table practices were consonant with God's response to the recovery of the lost. In seeking hospitality with the one spurned as a socio-religious outcast, then, Jesus is simply fulfilling the divine will.¹²

¹⁰ David S. Dockery, *Holman Bible Handbook* (Nashville: Holman, 1992), 587.

¹¹ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1522-1523.

¹² Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 673.

The religious and spiritual status of Zacchaeus and other characters in the gospel was like so many of William Booth's early converts. Because of their lifestyle or occupation they were considered unsavable. The Salvation Army's task today remains to be ambassadors for the Christ who lives to vindicate, as Green says above, whosoever will.

Stage 2, the preaching series, was conducted from October 16 through November 13, 2005. The first message, entitled "A Couple of Things You Gotta Know," was taken from Luke 19:1-10. I used this to introduce the series and to underscore Luke's emphasis on Jesus seeking the lost. The second sermon was taken from Luke 4:18-19. In a message I called "Preaching, Pickerel, and Paralytics" I surveyed the Galilean ministry of Jesus, which covers some ten chapters and represents the heart of Luke's Gospel. My stated purpose for this message was: "I want the congregation to have a better understanding of Jesus' ministry in his home town. . . . More importantly, I want to provoke a response to Jesus as either fraud or God." Message three, "This Isn't Mr. Rogers Neighborhood," was meant to portray Jesus' central teaching and his empowerment of his followers – including us – as related in Chapter 10:25-37. The final message of the series, entitled "And so Theophilus" from Luke 24:45-49, summarized the series and called for the congregation to respond by being active witnesses for Jesus.

The preaching series itself was experimental. Preaching with few or no notes, genre sensitivity, departing from the pulpit, and employing other devices were entirely new for me. At the same time I discovered that narrative preaching is a tailor's fit for me. Also, what I discovered in morphing into "Doc Lukas" in a first person approach proved Jeffrey Arthurs' assertion that:

This kind of sermon [narrative] takes longer to prepare than "three points and a poem," but the advantages make it worthwhile. If preachers mix in only one or

two monologues a year they'll add some zing to their Homiletical stew. Why bother? For two reasons: To adapt to our culture, and faithfully exposit the text.¹³

My preparation underscored the need to study not only the Scripture, but everything I could find about the author and his historical and cultural context, and also to discover his “big idea” and then interpret that principle for my listeners. When preparation is done well the result is powerful.

Although at the time of the project I felt like an amateur (and still feel this way) when preaching first person narrative and writing or rewriting parable, this initial experience was one of the most exciting experiences in my more than thirty years of preaching. This Gospel lends itself quite naturally to such an approach. For example, Luke could have said to a twenty-first century Theophilus: “Let me tell you the story.” Considering the components of a well structured plot, that modern language represents the Greek “orderly account” in Luke 1:3. Although I had done some amateurish first person sermons in the past in costume (I once dressed as a California Raisin!), in the series of sermons I did for this thesis-project I used props rather than full costuming. For example, I used a lab coat, stethoscope, and other accoutrements of the profession to represent Doc Lukas. I also entered from the rear of the Chapel, and this stunned the congregation who were not used to anything creative from me. I spoke the message from the floor of the chapel as though meeting with a family in a hospital waiting room. Although people always try to listen respectfully to my “traditional” style of preaching, everyone was totally – almost unwillingly – engaged in this process, teens included.

¹³ Jeffrey D. Arthurs, “Performing the Story: How to Preach First Person Narrative Sermon” *Preaching* 12, no. 5 (March/April, 1997), 30-35.

What they didn't know is that I was more stunned by their response and attention than they were by my presentation.

I discovered that people like stories. More than that, they follow them and are capable of discerning the theology and application embedded in the narrative. People "get" theology better than when it is stated as a direct proposition. Perhaps most exciting for me in the whole process was that I could see in their eyes that they themselves brought the scene alive. I was free to sense their connection with my communication owing to freedom from notes. After the first sermon one lady stated that I had brought Luke to life for her in a way no one ever had. It occurs to me that while I told the story, her own imagination and openness to the Holy Spirit's prompting was what breathed life into my tale telling. By preaching narrative narratively, my expository sermons honored the genre. In turn, God always honors faithful efforts to portray his word, as Isaiah 55 reminds us. In week two, when I returned to a more deductive approach, the congregation still heard what I had to say, and their close attention carried over from the previous sermon. I have to say, however, that forcing Luke into a deductive mold is now distasteful to me. I found that genre sensitive preaching is extremely important in an expository approach.

Week three was the high point of the series in terms of congregational connection and application to living. In a sermon entitled "This Isn't Mr. Rogers Neighborhood," found in Appendix 5, I gave my own version of the Parable of the Good Samaritan. What happened still amazes me. People were convinced that I was genuinely upset when I entered the pulpit. I could see it in their eyes. As the parable unfolded about Salvation Army people who neglected to help a man who was mugged, I noticed the congregation

listening with rapt attention. I was able to disguise the parable until the application in such a way that even our best lay Bible student had an “aha” moment near the end. When I got to the Samaritan’s question at the end of the parable, there was stunned silence with people looking at each other – a couple with accusing looks. After a wonderful moment, the tension was released, but I had a riveted audience the rest of the way on that morning. Although the parable was nearly a mirror of the Good Samaritan story, folks got so wrapped up in local names and places that they could not see it until I made the association and finished the sermon.

The final sermon was preached in a first person narrative style. “Dr. Jack Lukas” returned to sum up the series. There was obvious growth in congregational community after that series as demonstrated by the desire to study Luke-Acts in the congregation’s adult Bible Study. Additionally, there was a renewed interest and involvement in outreach ministries. Finally, while years have passed between the preaching series and the writing of this chapter, congregants still bring up Doc Lukas from time to time with references to style and themes. I believe they saw Luke’s Gospel alive in their own life’s story.

Stage 3: The Feed Back Survey

The results of this part of the project are mixed. Participation in this portion of my project was quite disappointing. Only four of the original eight who had responded to the Feed Forward responded to the Feed Back Survey. The Feed Forward sample represented twenty per cent of the total congregation, while this group represented only ten per cent. Those who did offer data seemed unwilling to be critical, even though I

invited critical responses. In the Survey header I stated: “Your thoughts will be very helpful in terms of reflecting new insight. I’m really interested to know what you think.”¹⁴ On the other hand, what respondents did say was consistent with the Feed Forward Survey.

Some precipitating factors may have influenced receiving only four responses. The preaching series concluded in November. In the Salvation Army, seasonal ministries dominate the entire congregation’s attention essentially from November 1 forward through Watchnight Services on New Year’s Eve. A great deal of planning and meetings accompany the implementation of these ministries. This also includes the Corps Officer (me), who has to harvest as much as half of the annual operating income during this time, as well as participate in and oversee the various outreaches. Thus, the low number of respondents may have been due to the timing of the preaching series. A second precipitating factor for low numerical response may have to do with loss of interest as higher priority issues were moved to their personal front burners due to the season. Folks were enthusiastic initially, but they may have gotten weary or just never got around to answering the survey by the time it was due. A third factor may have been reticence to be critical of their pastor due to their affection for him. And, due to the hierarchal nature of the Salvation Army, we do not always invite leadership accountability on certain issues. The lack of response was most disappointing because I was not looking for affirmation but simply some constructive criticism from those most impacted by my preaching.

At the end of the day, however, I do not believe the Feed Back was a complete failure. Because I preached the series with few or no notes, I was able to assess their

¹⁴ Appendix 4.

reactions while I was preaching. In other words, I was looking directly into their eyes the whole time. When you look your congregation straight in the eye you know if they are involved or if their minds are elsewhere. Conversely, the audience knows if the preacher is working to connect with them rather than just getting through his notes. Eye contact permits the listeners to enter the conversation. I noted that donning a lab coat, leaving the pulpit perch, and addressing them with direct eye contact raised our congregation's attentiveness exponentially. The survey once again raised the issue of narrative preaching. Of the forty potential responses by the four people who did give feedback, some twenty-five directly or by allusion preferred an approach that is narrative. That represents some sixty-one per cent of all responses, as Figure 3 shows.

The theme of narrative raised itself in at least twenty-five responses as I said. Setting was an issue for respondents which they articulated when they talked about bringing the ancient Scriptures to the modern context, visual aids, historical detail including sociological details (Gentiles, Samaritans, etc.) Character was noted through comments about Jesus personality attributes, his compassion, the fact of his simultaneous divine and human nature, his disposition towards healing miracles. Plot was most important as folks wanted to see how Jesus negotiated the drama that comes to us all. They picked up on Jesus suffering as a pattern of how to cope. And, many respondents took hope in the resurrection. At the same time there is a certain wonderful denouement to be found in one person's noting of Jesus cooking fish after he was raised.

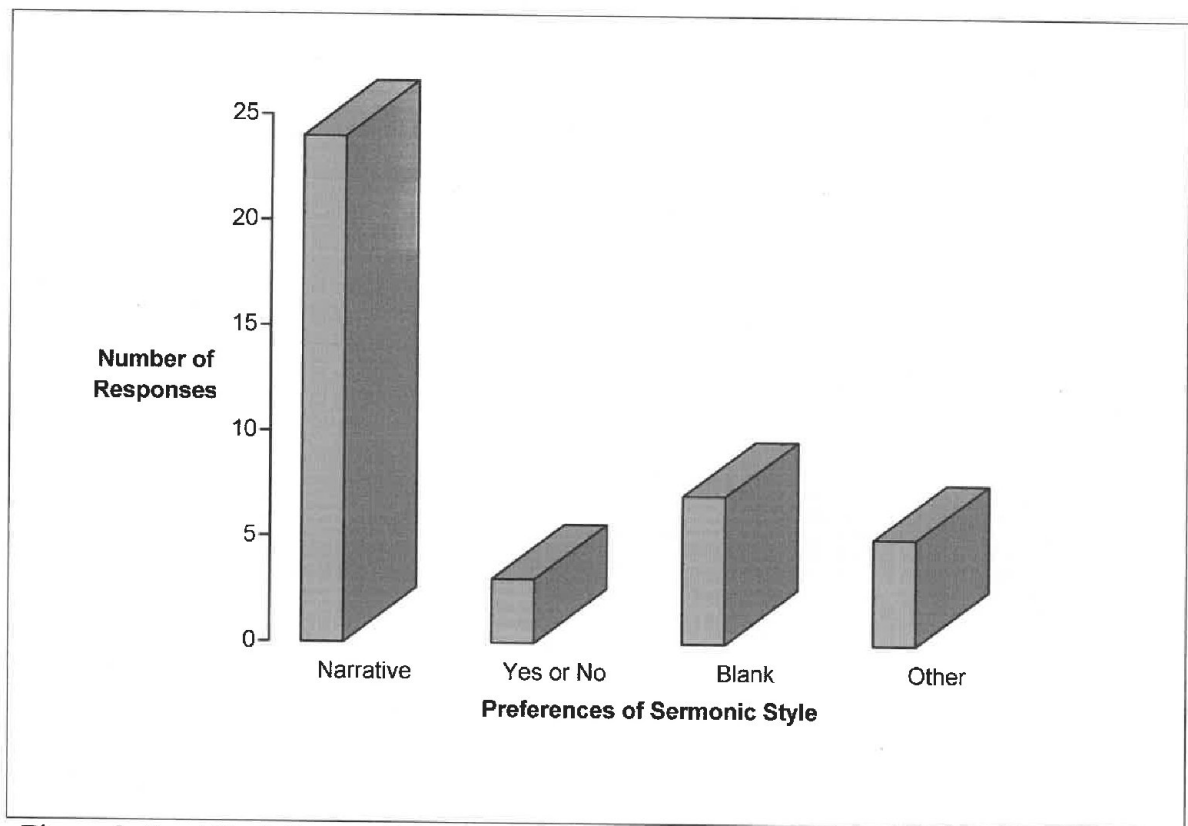


Figure 3. Feed Back Survey Responses.

Other responses were yes or no which virtually precludes any useful data in such a subjective context. One respondent answered the following to a question on worship inclusivity (really a question about our effectiveness in speaking to the congregation's own life story): "Our worship times are always "inclusive," almost patronizingly so at times."¹⁵ The final question on what Luke is about gave a menu of choices and asked the potential respondent to elaborate on their two chosen answers. Interestingly, all four respondents answered this question and their comments were the most transparently narrative oriented of the Feedback survey. Representative of their responses is the following: "Well, firstly, Luke wrote like a historian, with a view of preserving a record.

¹⁵ Appendix 4, 115.

The stories also record the Lord's love and care for outcasts. I.e., Samaritans, women, children, tax collectors, sinner. Etc."¹⁶ Another response referred to Luke's storytelling as putting us on the scene like a live report from CNN or NBC Nightly News.

Of the ten questions posed, two bear noting because of their predisposition towards a narrative approach to preaching: Question 2 asked: "The Gospel of Luke is mainly about?" All four respondents answered. They gave answers such as: "It is an account of Jesus life," "The facts from his conception to ascension," "How he relates to us," and "Jesus's life and ministry." These folks want to know about Jesus and Luke's experience (story) and how that relates to their own. Asking what Luke is about could easily have elicited lists of topics. But, my respondents used words such as "account," "life and," and even the sort of *inclusio* "conception to ascension" infers story, in my opinion. At the risk of a further disclaimer, I have a bias because I know these folks well, since we are a small community. They come to church looking for some affinity with their own drama and how to manage their own life's plot, so to speak. Question 10 cited above asked the respondents to circle whether the Gospel of Luke is about "lectures, history, poetry, stories, miracles, debates." I asked them to circle two and tell me why. All four circled "history." One circled stories and the other three circled miracles. Although Luke is replete with doctrine and theology, not one response cited either. Even though I kept asking about worship and ministry, these folks continually kept responding with answers that appeared to indicate that they wanted religious experience that would help them with real life issues. So regardless of what I asked related to form of worship or ministry, and even if I invited criticism of the Corps Officers (pastors), it seems that

¹⁶ Appendix 4. I strove to quote the respondent accurately including non-sanitized grammar and spelling.

our folks want a Jesus who lives the narrative of their own story with them. One example is in the comment of a most colorful New England Yankee saint in our congregation who responded with “How He brought me out of the muck and mire” in the very first question of the Feed Forward survey. Her life has been a caricature of rural New Hampshire poverty with abuse. Like Jane (not her name), others in the congregation want to know that someone recognizes and can help in the rising action of their personal plots, and is there to be a hero when their crises reaches its apex. They also want a denouement that lands them in heaven and home. Whether it’s the couple in recovery, the parents of a daughter who just gave birth out of a one night stand, or the elderly grandmother now responsible for her grandson just out of incarceration, these dear folks want that same resolution in their life’s story.

A whole new way of preaching emerged for me as a result of this project. The project revealed that genre sensitive preaching – in this instance, narrative preaching – is especially effective for this generation and emerging generations. I discovered that by preaching Biblical narrative narratively, I am a more effective preacher. And, by teaching future generations of Salvation Army preachers to preach narrative narratively, we will be more effective with Salvation Army congregations as well as potential converts in our meld of Revivalism and Social Work.

When I started this Doctor of Ministry process, my goals were to wake up my mind, to keep my heart sensitive to the Holy Spirit, and then to set a personal culture of striving towards excellence in preaching in my final years of active ministry. Chapter 5 will complete this part of my journey. There will be some observations in terms of what

has been learned along the way on several fronts including not only the present work, but also observations about the Salvation Army, our broader theological tradition as Wesleyans, re-communication of the Gospel and communication in this generation, and a peek forward to what might be if Jesus chooses to tarry.

CHAPTER 5 OUTCOMES

And now, Hallelujah, the rest of my days
Shall gladly be spent in promoting his praise

– William Booth, *The Salvation Army Song Book*

The goal of a sermon is actionable content: Bible-based instruction and encouragement lodges deep in the heart and mind of the listener ready to be used again and again as the need arises.

– Gordon MacDonald, "Soul on Display"

My goal for this Doctor of Ministry process was first to wake up my mind, then to keep my heart sensitive to the Holy Spirit, and strive towards excellence in preaching in my final years of active ministry. Chapter 5 will reflect on this as a journey begun. I will observe what I have learned along the way on several fronts including not only with this thesis-project, but I will also make observations about the Salvation Army, our broader theological tradition as Wesleyans, re-communication of the Gospel, and communication in this generation, and I will peek forward to what might be if Jesus chooses to tarry or at least suffers me to occupy the planet a bit longer. With this in mind the balance of Chapter 5 will answer two questions: What did I learn? How will these outcomes affect my/our ministry? Before moving ahead on these two questions, permit me to note that the “we” of question two does not denote the so-called royal we. The Salvation Army denominational system of ministry is one of shared pastorate and administration. Both husband and wife in a ministry team are fully commissioned and ordained. Thus, the “we” is inclusive of my wife and me as a single ministry team.

What Did I Learn?

In this first section I comment on some insights gained about my own tradition as a Salvationist. Like an empty nest couple finding each other again, what I have discovered about the Army in its meld of Revivalism and Wesleyan-style biblical holiness with Social Work is fresh information and inspiration. Secondly, I comment about how the Salvation Army context, combined with the academic exercise, affect what I take away from the project proper. Finally, I will share how this has affected my views of preaching in general.

The Salvation Army has been one of the four great passions of my life since 1974. My other three passions are the Lord God, my wife and our children, music and the arts. Throughout the course of this experience I gained a fresh perspective on Salvation Army theology and practice. We truly are a meld of nineteenth-century Revivalism and Wesleyan Biblical holiness tempered into a gospel alloy that remains current in the present generations. Catherine Booth's sense of justice motivated her husband and their movement to boldly go where no religion had gone before: the Army created a Social Work model that remains viable. As I examined our methodology, I came away with both celebration and concern for our movement now grown to be a denomination. On the one hand, Booth and his entourage were willing to marshal even the most outlandish communications methods of his day. On the other hand, our approach to Gospel communication has not kept pace with the founder's visionary use of the media. A case in point is how we taught homiletics at the School For Officer Training from WWII until nearly the turn of the century (see Chapter 1). With the foregoing in mind my thesis question was: How can Salvation Army preachers adapt to their current communications

environment in order to communicate the Gospel message with early day effectiveness? That question implies that we must modify our presentation of the Gospel to meet the demands of the present age.

William Booth instinctively gravitated towards McLuhan's concept of the Maelstrom and embraced its power, rather than fighting against its force. For example, Wesley's innovative horseback itinerancy and open air spontaneous preaching provoked the establishment of his day wherever he spoke. The Wesleys, Caughey, Palmer, and Finney, mavericks all, were seminal influences for Booth. Caughey was a fiery American Wesleyan charismatic. Palmer conducted parlor lectures on biblical holiness from her Manhattan apartment, touting such promises as the possibility of perfect love. Finney was a renegade American Presbyterian who pressed his own system of theology. Finney always exacted a verdict, demanding on-the-spot confession like fictional courtroom lawyer Perry Mason. Under the influence of mother church, the Booths created a gospel for their hour. *Christian History* magazine said of the Booths: "The 'Prophet of the Poor,' William, brought the gospel to the poverty-stricken districts of Britain in word and deed. The Army Mother, Catherine, championed the cause for women to open their mouths and their lives to proclaim the gospel."¹ Catherine Booth's pro woman in vocation pamphlet entitled "Female Ministry" was countercultural in Victorian England. William Booth's most famous sermon "While Women Weep" championed the cause of the poor and was a diatribe against a system that abused the poor institutionally. These are perhaps the best examples of their radical gospel rhetoric.

¹ Norman H. Murdoch, "The General," in "William and Catherine Booth," *Christian History* 26, vol. 9 no. 2 (1990), 11.

The lesson for me is to keep it radical. That means a willingness to marshal the media maelstrom from electronic devices to YouTube, social networking, and beyond in the service of my own developing gospel rhetoric. Like the Booths, I want to discover a fresh recommunication of the Gospel to meet the drama of the socially and economically disenfranchised. While the Salvation Army provides a preponderance of food pantries and soup kitchens, there is very little personal interaction. Often the folks who volunteer in Salvation Army ministries want merely a warm feeling and are reluctant to speak the Gospel as they interact with those they serve. One challenge for my own integration of Social Work with Revivalism is to lead those who follow me towards other-centered ministry and confession. This calls for a fresh definition of “GETTING SAVED, KEEPING SAVED, GETTING OTHERS SAVED” and includes preaching narrative narratively in this generation.

My thesis question (How can Salvation Army preachers adapt to their current communications environment in order to communicate the Gospel message with early day effectiveness?) reflects the organization’s fundamental call to operate effectively in the current context. A narrative style of preaching for this generation of potential Salvationists will help them to hear, see, touch, smell, and give voice to a fresh gospel in a neo-oral era as the previous chapters have shown. By extension, a generation that speaks to these ears and honors the literary forms employed by poets, sages, historians, and collectors of God’s legal code will be more effective in bringing men and women, girls and boys to Jesus’ feet. I have been challenged to change my own preaching style, including delivery, to reflect genre and congregation (audience) sensitivity in addition to a narrative style of preaching.

For example, using few or no notes was a radical departure in my sermon delivery. I continue to use few or no notes when speaking. Physically stepping away from the pulpit was its own emancipation. I was trained that the pulpit should be in the middle of the platform (ironically, to emphasize the centrality of preaching), that the Bible should be seen on the pulpit or held, and that one must stand behind the pulpit. I did not realize that the pulpit can also become a hiding place. I should have seen this as a symbolic wall between the congregation and me. What freedom came when I escaped the cloister and its guiding principle “three points and a poem!”

I discovered that I could preach in many different forms. I have freedom to experiment with the form of the sermon. My thesis explores this idea with regard to narrative. Two things particularly stand out for me from the sermon series in which I tried new ways of preaching. First, Scripture is strong enough to stand on its own with any listener. Luke did not need any help from me to relate to our Salvation Army congregation and be clearly understood. Second, the most important thing I learned from the Luke sermon series was that people want to see, hear, smell, feel, and taste their own story in the Gospel story. When I call to mind the congregation’s reactions to my retelling of the Good Samaritan parable in a Salvation Army context, it still gives me pause. Some of the folks were stunned. Others got fidgety. One or two shot furtive, almost accusatory, glances. But all were in eye-to-eye contact with me. In this moment I found my voice as a storyteller in the retelling of this parable while trying to preach without notes in a narrative style. The congregation’s rapt attention and reactions stunned me. My proximity and presence took all of us to another place – a sacred place where the Holy Spirit came near to all of us. Since that time my wife and I strategically

preach first person narrative sermons with great effect. Making them a part of our homiletical stew has helped our congregations towards moments of renewed commitment to Christ.

I made other discoveries in conducting the Feed Back Survey that proved to be hard news for me. The Feed Back Survey of the project proper was a post sermon series questionnaire bookending a Feed Forward Survey relating to the Gospel of Luke. This turned out to be a lesson in my academic culpability. I miscalculated the time period of the project because we did not finish prior to the extremely focused Salvation Army seasonal ministries. The entire Salvation Army team was involved in Christmas outreach. Thus, my survey respondents could have been distracted, or perhaps they did not wish to be critical of their pastor at this time. I have no formal training in conducting surveys. We hire an outside consultant in our system when an empirical survey is needed. With only four respondents out of the ten invited, an accurate assessment was difficult to draw out from such a limited sampling. The big take away for me is that if I decide to do research in the future, I need to get formal exposure to the discipline and work with a mentor throughout the process.

Finally, my personal preaching perspective changed radically throughout the Doctor of Ministries process with the thesis-project as a focal point of change. I have learned that preaching is a “with people” exercise. Ruminating on my view of sermons, I tended to see them as performances. I began to see that pew hermeneutics are a critical interpretative discipline in sermon making. I think that sometimes pastors become preachers on Sunday morning. We focus so much on sermon preparation that we neglect the hopes, dreams, and hurts of our congregations. Pew hermeneutics means bringing our

people to the study “with” us. As Scott Gibson says, “Homileticians must give attention to audience receptivity if they are to be effective in preaching with relevance.”² One would think that the small size of most Salvation Army congregations would make understanding our listeners the easiest of all the disciplines in preparing sermons. But that was not the case for me. Not until I retold the Good Samaritan parable dressed in a Salvation Army uniform did it occur to me that I needed to bring my congregation along with me to the study.

Those who preach really do stand between two worlds. John Stott says: The earthing of the Word in the world is not something optional; it is an indispensable characteristic of true Christian preaching. The great doctrines of inspiration and incarnation have established a divine precedent for communication. God condescended to our humanity, though without surrendering his deity. Our bridges too must be firmly anchored on both sides of the chasm, by refusing either to compromise the divine content of the message or to ignore the human context in which it has to be spoken. We have to plunge fearlessly into both worlds, ancient and modern, biblical and contemporary, and to listen attentively to both. For only then shall we understand what each is saying, and so discern the Spirit’s message to the present generation.³

Stott’s reminder is that our work has temporal and eternal significance. We preachers are responsible to bring the eternal gospel to the present age. As the Scriptures came alive for me, Luke’s Gospel came alive for my congregation. For this moment the ancient text traversed the chasm of time and met with the present experience of my listeners. I want this responsibility to bring Scripture alive to color my ministry as long as God gives me leave to minister in his name.

² Scott M. Gibson, ed., *Preaching to a Shifting Culture* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2004), 109.

³ John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 145.

I would like to take a moment to thank Haddon Robinson for his influence. Dr. Robinson's writing and preaching have had a great impact in reshaping my approach to preaching. I consider Dr. Robinson a Babe Ruth among modern preachers in preparing the next generation of preachers. I discovered that his approach allows the Scripture to breathe and thus live for my listeners. His common sense suggestions may appear simplistic to some. But, in an age when common sense is as rare as the Hope Diamond, Robinson is anything but simplistic. In identifying the Big Idea of a passage he cultivates seeds of clarity while still including all the traditional sermon preparation arts. His insistence on the respect of authorial intention is particularly noteworthy. While often more implied than stated, Dr. Robinson presses the preacher to explore genre as integral to fleshing out meaning of a thought unit. Parenthetically, I am grateful to Dr. Scott Gibson for his summary chart of Robinson's Ten Stages as well as his own "A Format For Sermons."⁴ I have taken these tools as a personal yoke as I harness my senses in the service of accurate Gospel recommunication. I have posted them prominently on my study wall next to my picture of the 2004 Boston Red Sox.

How Will These Outcomes Affect My Ministry?

The thesis-project proper and the Doctor of Ministries journey will affect my ministry in three ways. First, I am striving to be truly expository in my preaching. I want never again to violate the caveat that recognizes that Scripture can never say what it never said. This includes an intentional shift from manipulating a passage to fit into an

⁴ Appendix 1.

alliterative three points and a poem. Secondly, my Doctor of Ministry work is developing into a platform for mentoring of junior colleagues. It seems that many of my younger colleagues are looking for strategies and mentoring in ways to more effectively proclaim the truth. My wife and I have conducted clergy small groups and we are finding ourselves in this position with increasing regularity. I have also conducted training in narrative preaching. A third area affected has to do with how I wish to be remembered as a minister of the Gospel in the Salvation Army. The generative stage of a vocation tends to be a time of monument building. Like many others I want to be remembered when I have passed off the scene. Salvationist David Dalziel described this dynamic in a typical Salvation Army way:

I would that others would see the marks of Jesus in me,
For they will not believe if they do not perceive
The marks of Jesus in me.⁵

Expository preaching, embracing a mentoring role, and a renewing my commitment to holy living are only a sampling of some obvious effects of the project, cohort style of learning, seminar interaction, and readings.

We constantly interact with people who are considering full time ministry. There is interaction within our corps (local congregations), at regional functions, and within the community at large. I never know who these folks may be. Even as I write these lines one young man is in his final semester at the School For Officer Training in New York. I first met him after he found a Salvation Army book at the local garbage dump's book exchange table. He came in to the Corps looking for an opportunity to serve. I gave him

⁵ The Salvation Army, *The Salvation Army Song Book* (Verona, NJ: The Salvation Army National Headquarters, 1987).

the vacuum and showed him to the Chapel. M. worked cheerfully. Our relationship grew from there, and the Doctor of Ministry program prepared me to traverse the generations between us and taught me to speak his language. I will need to continue to develop skills that will keep me malleable enough to communicate with other new partners in ministry even as I pass off the scene.

There are increasing opportunities for mentoring younger TSA preachers. I have spoken to this above to some degree. Other forums for dialogue may emerge such as guest lecturing at the School for Officer Training, Officer's Meetings (Retreat, Councils), or lay leadership forums. The Army has its own internal academic journal and magazine for officers; I might be able to write articles for those publications. Many formal and informal opportunities for affirmation and instruction of our juniors exist. Administration will read this thesis-project and may have some particular thoughts of their own for further ministry opportunities. I have felt the need to hone my writing skills with a view to designing a series of useful pieces for officers in training, and the laity.

I sense the challenge to move from mental alacrity to spiritual vitality. The challenge for Salvation Army preachers is to embrace a unique kerygma serving the present age. The process of opening Scripture includes self-exegesis and willingness to change. When I first entered the Doctor of Ministry program, I just wanted to be a better preacher. My goal was first to wake up my mind, then to keep my heart sensitive to the Holy Spirit, and set a personal culture of striving towards excellence in preaching in my final years of active ministry and beyond. These continue to be primary in my agenda. I still want to be a better preacher. But, I want the rest of my life's story to reflect the reality of God's gracious presence in my generation, in my own story. I want to

participate in a fresh Gospel proclamation that brings men and women, girls and boys to a saving, sanctifying, and serving relationship with Jesus. My desire echoes the Army founder, William Booth, who concluded his great paeon of praise:

And now, hallelujah! the rest of my days
Shall gladly be spent in promoting his praise
Who opened his bosom to pour out this sea
Of boundless salvation for you and for me.⁶

⁶ *The Salvation Army Song Book*, 82.

APPENDIX 1 FORMAT FOR SERMONS

Dr. Scott Gibson's "A Format for Sermons," reproduced below, was distributed during his guest lecture "Residency 1, The Path from Text to Sermon" at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Spring 2005.

A FORMAT FOR SERMONS

Dr. Scott Gibson

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

(6/2005)

Text: (This is the address of the biblical passage from which you are preaching.)

Subject: (What is the author talking about? Don't forget to use an interrogative: Who, what, why, when, where, which, how.)

Complement: (What is the author saying about what he is talking about? This is the answer to the subject question.)

Main/Exegetical Idea: (Subject + Complement = Main Idea)

Homiletical Idea: (This is a pithy statement of your idea.)

Purpose: (Why are you preaching this sermon? A purpose is specific and measurable.)

"As a result of hearing this sermon, I want my listeners to....."

What follows is either your outline or manuscript. Remember to write your outline in full sentences. Put transitions into parentheses. Outlines should have a complete introduction, conclusion, and transitions written out in full. A clear outline will be clear to your listeners.

As for manuscripts, follow the model of the outline by indenting your paragraphs to help you see the flow of the sermon.

APPENDIX 2 SALVATION ARMY DOCTRINES

The text of the doctrines of The Salvation Army, as set out in Schedule 1 of The Salvation Army Act (1980), appears below.

- 1. We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and that they only constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice.**
- 2. We believe that there is only one God, who is infinitely perfect, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things, and who is the only proper object of religious worship.**
- 3. We believe that there are three persons in the Godhead – the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, undivided in essence and co-equal in power and glory.**
- 4. We believe that in the person of Jesus Christ the Divine and human natures are united, so that He is truly and properly God and truly and properly man.**
- 5. We believe that our first parents were created in a state of innocence, but by their disobedience they lost their purity and happiness, and that in consequence of their fall all men have become sinners, totally depraved, and as such are justly exposed to the wrath of God.**
- 6. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has by His suffering and death made an atonement for the whole world so that whosoever will may be saved.**
- 7. We believe that repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, are necessary to salvation.**

- 8. We believe that we are justified by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and that he that believeth hath the witness in himself.**
- 9. We believe that continuance in a state of salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ.**
- 10. We believe that it is the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified, and that their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.**
- 11. We believe in the immortality of the soul; in the resurrection of the body; in the general judgment at the end of the world; in the eternal happiness of the righteous; and the endless punishment of the wicked.**

APPENDIX 3 FEED FORWARD SURVEY WITH RESPONSES

Ten individuals were invited to participate in the research study. Nine agreed to participate; eight responded to the Feed Forward Survey. Respondents were asked not to sign their names, because I wanted them to feel free to be candid. The text of the survey appears in boldfaced type; the responses, in full, appear below each question.

The Gospel of Luke

Major Carl E. Carvill

While this short survey is in partial requirement of a Doctor of Ministry course, my intention is twofold: First, what do we think about this particular Gospel and what difference does that knowledge make in our day to day living? Second, in what ways should these impressions impact our corporate worship (i.e. structure of the worship experience, music selected or not, readings, etc.)? There are no wrong answers to the following questions and no answer too short or too long (although the more you say, the more I will have to reflect upon).

Please do not take a great deal of time to study Luke before you answer the following questions. I will be doing a four week series from the Gospel following which you will be asked to answer some of the same or similar questions again. Spontaneity is really important especially in the latter questions. They will have an impact on how we approach this series. Hopefully, as a result of our working together, you and I will be inspired and challenged by Luke and changed through the Holy Spirit. Please feel free to write on the reverse side of this paper.

1. When I think of the Gospel of Luke, the following impressions and memories come to mind...

Respondent 1: The physician Luke and God the greatest Physician.

R. 2: When Zacharias was made mute for his unbelief in the angel. Also, how John jumped in the womb when Mary approached Elizabeth.

R. 3: When I think of the Gospel of Luke I'm impressed with the message that Jesus was truly human and truly God. Jesus is shown caring for all people no matter what their status in society.

R. 4: How He brought me out of the muck and mire.

R. 5: Blank.

R. 6: Historian, Doctor, Neat details, Luke Chp. 2.

R. 7: Just how perfect God planned his son's life for us right up to his death.

R. 8: Blank.

2. The Gospel of Luke is mainly about...

R. 1: Jesus as a man.

R. 2: Jesus' life from conception to ascension.

R. 3: The Gospel of Luke is mainly about the life and times of Jesus. From when John the Baptist was conceived through Jesus' ascension [ascension?] to heaven.

R. 4: My Jesus in His humanness.

R. 5: The life of Christ – His humanity as the Son of Man.

R. 6: A running theme throughout Luke is Jesus' compassion for Gentile, Samaritans, women, children, tax collectors, sinners, and other outcasts.

R. 7: The life of Christ from birth, as a child, a young man, man, and savior for all.

R. 8: Blank.

3. Sermons on this Gospel should ...

R. 1: Show His human feeling and emotions and compassion.

R. 2: Include that Luke was a doctor and wrote about the facts.

R.3: Sermons on this Gospel should focus on Jesus' life and his compassion for all...his humanness.

R. 4: Relate to him as Human, He truly feels as we feel at times makes Him more real all the time.

R. 5: [Be about] when He came – why He came – who He was. The reality of both God incarnate and His salvation.

R. 6: Show no one is outside the scope of Jesus' ability to save, then focus on making people keenly aware of their need for salvation.

R. 7: Be read by all Christians to get a better understanding of Christ's life, works.

R. 8: Blank.

4. ... would make this Gospel more meaningful to me.

R. 1: Luke's background.

- R. 2: The fact that Jesus was/became a man.
- R. 3: Exploring the people's lives would make this Gospel more meaningful to me. Why were tax collectors so terrible and such?
- R. 4: Blank.
- R. 5: Focus on Christ's compassion.
- R. 6: Exposition.
- R. 7: Reading it more often.
- R. 8: Understanding it.

5. ...should be included/excluded from the Holiness Meeting to make this Book (or any other for that matter) mean something for my life.

- R. 1: God's love and His gift of Salvation [included].
- R. 2: Blank.
- R. 3: Limit Antioch to 1 song with less volume.
- R. 4: Nothing.
- R. 5: More people's participation [included].
- R. 6: Blank.
- R. 7: Interactions and roll playing could be included in...
- R. 8: Real life examples [Testimonies, included].

6. The young people need...

- R. 1: To know God is able to forgive and He does understand, temptation, etc.
- R. 2: More guidance.

- R. 3: The young people need to know that Jesus cares for them.
- R. 4: Exactly what receive here in the Holiness Meeting [Sunday Morning Worship]. I satisfied in my young mind in an older body.
- R. 5: Time sensitive material (Sermons). They can surely relate to Luke's writings.
- R. 6: To know that we respect them enough to give them deep truth.
- R. 7: Know about Jesus' life.
- R. 8: To be.

7. The older folks need...

- R. 1: To know God is with them and does not stop using people just because they feel old (Elizabeth).
- R. 2: To know God will help them if they ask.
- R. 3: The older people need to have meetings that start and finish on time.
Lower the volume so they don't go home with a headache.
- R. 4: This person gave same answer for both questions 6 & 7.
- R. 5: Challenge to mature spiritually.
- R. 6: To learn their lives are not over. They need to grow in Christ everyday.
- R. 7: To remember Jesus' life.
- R. 8: Blank.

8. Sometimes people don't "get it" in worship because...

R. 1: We are not looking for money or things. We want all ages, all walks of life to know Jesus and be saved.

R. 2: They don't realize that God is always there and He is the focus of Worship.

R. 3: Sometimes people don't "get it" in our worship because we need to keep the words in examples in simple terms. They want to go home and start watching the clock instead of listening to the message.

R. 4: I'll never understand why they wouldn't.

R. 5: They don't come ready to participate.

R. 6: They have never been born – again.

R. 7: They don't listen. Today people have too much going on in their lives to take time for "God" and take in what God has to offer.

R. 8: It's jumpy.

9. Visitors always seem to like our Corps...

R. 1: Because they are not judged. They truly feel welcomed and loved.

R. 2: We are so friendly. We teach God's Word and His love.

R. 3: Visitors always seem to like our Corps because our officers [clergy] are open, caring, and treat visitors as "welcomed guests" whom they want to return.

R. 4: Where are they now?

R. 5: It's friendly – but we need more people to follow up than the COs.

- R. 6: I think visitors who are believers think we are nice and welcoming, but don't stick around because there is not a lot of strong, pointed teaching here. I believe people come to church to learn and be challenged, not necessarily to worship in the true sense of the word. There are some who feel "warm and fuzzy" about our "worship services," but that is more because they have done the right thing by their coming, not because they have met with God. I think some come because we offer just enough liturgical and ceremonial style to be reminiscent of the pasts, where the emphasis was on merely showing up for the show in order to gain favor with God, rather than from a sense or need to hear "thus saith the Lord." I believe our present "worship services" usually help people maintain the status quo, rather than challenge them to go deep with God and be changed. In a word, our services use a lot of the right terminology, but are lukewarm. We all know what that means. I do not say this with a haughty spirit.
- R. 7: Because we're friendly, caring, open. We don't ask the wrong questions.
- R. 8: Because the people [are friendly].

10. The most important thing about worship for me is...

- R. 1: Learning God's Word and seeing God praised and glorified.
- R. 2: It makes me feel closer to Jesus and more knowledgeable about his teachings. I feel that it brings me closer to other Christians.
- R. 3: The most important thing about worship for me is to get "recharged" in the spirit for the upcoming week.

R. 4: This is the only place all are on the same salvation wave length. Other meetings can and usually are less satisfying.

R. 5: Centering of Christ, one Holy God and being a seeker of the Holy Spirit's direction for me at that moment in time. Often, He (H.S.) confirms His leading and direction culminates the whole week on Sunday Morning!

R. 6: Exhortational preaching.

R. 7: It's my time to reflect what God has done for me!

R. 8: Having a feeling of trust in something not everyone believes.

Thanks for your pre-series input.

APPENDIX 4 FEED BACK SURVEY WITH RESPONSES

Ten individuals were invited to participate in the research study. Nine agreed to participate; four responded to the Feed Back Survey. Respondents were asked not to sign their names, because I wanted them to feel free to be candid. The text of the survey appears in boldfaced type; the responses, in full, appear below each question.

The Gospel of Luke

Major Carl E. Carvill

Before the sermon series from Luke I asked you to complete a Feed Forward Survey. Book-ending this process, your thoughts will be very helpful in terms of reflecting new insight to the truth as found in the Scriptures. As you prepare to answer the following questions, you might reflect on whether we took any of your suggestions in terms of making worship more meaningful? Are we a more effective community of faith over the last month or so? There are no wrong answers and all criticisms will be interpreted as constructive. Finally, I'm really interested to know what you think.

1. How did you react to the visits of Doc Lukas?

Respondent 1: I thought it was an interesting approach to transport the ancient Scriptures to a contemporary audience.

R. 2: I loved it. It gave me a new respect for Luke for the work he did and the time spent researching the facts.

R. 3: Very well – nothing like visual aids makes it more real. [For those who have] not believed [it made it] more real. I've always believed.

R. 4: I enjoyed them very much. They make the Scriptures much clearer.

2. The Gospel of Luke is mainly about...

R. 1: In the most general terms it is an account of Jesus life by a scholarly man with great attention to historical details. Especially the Lord's birth, annunciation, birth of John the Baptist.

R. 2: Jesus as a man and God, the facts from conception to the ascension.

R. 3: Jesus and how He relates to us in every aspect of our living and how He gathers one to Himself.

R. 4: Jesus' life and his ministry leading up to his final hours.

3. Were the worship times inclusive and did you see any reflection of your previous suggestions?

R. 1: Our worship times are always "inclusive," almost patronizingly so at times.

R. 2: Luke as a doctor and healer, showed Jesus as a man with compassion and emotions.

R. 3: Yes and yes.

R. 4: Yes. I believe so at least as far as I'm concerned. I felt we were really delving into what Luke was trying to convey.

4. Did worship make sense as an organized whole?

R. 1: Yes.

R. 2: Yes, from the 1st week we knew that Dr. Lukas was chosen by God to gather the facts and by week 4 we saw it applied to today, the Good Samaritan.

R. 3: Yes. But then, to me, it usually has!

R. 4: Yes.

5. One thing that really sticks out from Luke over the last month is...

R. 1: ?

R. 2: Luke's recognition of the women involved in Jesus' life.

R. 3: [his] intelligence.

R. 4: The feeling that he was trying to make us feel like we were there and he was really trying to reach us with the truth.

6. You really "hit the mark" about Jesus when you said...

R. 1: When you spoke of Zaccheus.

R. 2: After His resurrection Jesus sat and ate fish. He is still a man.

R. 3: [respondent deleted word "said"] made us realize the many attributes of Jesus and how He can relate to our every thought, deed, hurt, joy, etc. Certainly he is my all in all.

R. 4: How he was truly a combination of divine and human and how much he suffered for us.

7. You really “missed the mark” about Jesus when you said...

R. 1: N/A.

R. 2: N/A.

R. 3: Blank.

R. 4: Blank.

8. I think there should be more sermons from Luke’s Gospel because...

R. 1: It is in the Bible and thus should be preached.

R. 2: There is so much more in his Gospel.

R. 3: It helps the understanding of what Luke wrote and even a verse by verse each week till a Book is done is good – Been there!

R. 4: To be honest because I really enjoyed them. They made it all so clear.

9. I think that we’ve heard enough sermons on Luke because...

R. 1: N/A.

R. 2: Blank.

R. 3: Hey! Ya can’t get enough of Jesus’s life.

R. 4: Blank.

10. The Gospel of Luke is made up mostly of: lectures, history, poetry, stories, miracles, debates. Please circle two and tell why.

R. 1: (Circled history and stories) Well, firstly, Luke wrote like a historian, with the view of preserving a record. The stories also record the Lord’s love and care

for outcasts. I.e. Gentiles, Samaritans, women, children, tax collectors, sinner.
Etc.

R. 2: (Circled history, miracles) Luke set out to gather facts, with the help of the Holy Spirit and eyewitnesses he recorded history. Miracles, as a doctor he knew that Jesus' life was filled with miracles, starting with his cousin John and his elderly parents, the virgin birth, etc.

R. 3: (Circled history, miracles) History Because of so much background brought in to his narration. Miracles Because Jesus used so many to reach out to the lost.

R. 4: (Circled history, miracles) History because it tells all about Jesus' suffering and ministry in a readable and understanding way and of course miracles because it describes the many miracles Jesus did during his short lifetime here with us.

Many thanks for your feeding back.

APPENDIX 5 SERMON SERIES

Below are the outlines used for the four sermons preached as part of the research component of this thesis-project. The Feed Forward Survey (Appendix 3) preceded these sermons; the Feed Back Survey (Appendix 4) followed them.

Sermon 1 (preached October 16, 2005)

"A Couple of Things You Gotta Know"

(First in a series of four from the Gospel of Luke)

Text: Luke 19:1-10

Subject: Why did Jesus pick Zaccheus out of the crowd and “call him out” in front of everyone?

Complement: Jesus saw in Zaccheus all the issues of the Jews wrapped up in a single person, which provided an opportunity to celebrate his mission in the clearest possible terms.

Main/Exegetical Idea: Jesus picked Zaccheus out of the crowd to celebrate his mission.

Homiletical Idea: Jesus calls so we can stand tall!

Purpose: Via a First Person Narrative sermon to introduce a series of sermons from Luke’s Gospel , highlight and apply the key verse of the Gospel (19:10), and get my listeners out of the personal “trees” in life and invite Christ for a transformational visit to their “homes.”

1. (Walk from the back wearing a doctor's office outfit; lab coat, stethoscope, etc.) Good morning. My name is Jack Lukas. To be precise, John H. Lukas, MD. My friends just call me Doc.
2. Are you the Theophilus family?
3. Good. I've been expecting you.
4. I have to tell you that I'm excited to see you. These days I don't see many people from back home in Antioch. Since I joined the Paul of Tarsus Evangelistic Association, I haven't been home much.
5. Sorry, I'm a bit ahead of myself here. Your letter asked for reliable information about the Nazarene Prophet – Jesus. Well, it all started right after the political murder of Stephen the Jew in Jerusalem.
6. Things got really difficult for followers of The Way and they had to seek refuge outside of Jerusalem. Ironically, one of their fiercest opponents was the Apostle formerly known as Saul of Tarsus.
7. To make a long story short, I met some of these people while I was practicing Internal Medicine in Antioch. Their story was a bit “far fetched” except that there was an aura about them. And, they treated each other with genuine respect and affection. For a long time, I was having doubts about religious beliefs and practices in general. I can't tell how disillusioning it was for me every time I tended to a sick Temple Prostitute and her gentlemen “worshippers.”
8. These followers of The Way, these “Christians,” won me over as I observed their relationships and obvious emotional well being. In due course, I called

on their Christ because they were so believable. He came to my spirit and made me a believer. Now I was a “Christian.”

9. Well, my specialty is forensics. Before I joined the Paul team I was called often to do crime scene investigations.
10. These days that curious nature which made me a student of the human condition has had some other benefits. Many people told me stories about Jesus the Nazarene prophet from Judea. And, for the most part, what they had to say was plausible. But, I needed to know for myself about this man of Galilee called by so many names.
11. So I put my forensics to good use and I hope they’ll be as useful for you. Theophilus, as for me.
12. I don’t have time to go over the whole chart today. But, I have a friend who’ll share more the next time you come in to the Clinic here.
13. But, there is a story that I thought I heard one of my patients reading earlier that gives the whole diagnosis and treatment plan – sorry, I mean sums up why Jesus came to earth in the first place.
14. It seems – and I was able to verify this as an accurate account – that a week or two before Jesus finished his ministry, he decided to go through Jericho one last time (that’s a village in Palestine not too far from Jerusalem).
15. Apparently it caused quite a stir when he was in any neighborhood. After three years of very public ministry the only people who didn’t have an opinion about the Son of Man were expired or not yet born.

16. A local chief Tax Collector – yeah, I know, those Tax Guys just turn my stomach, too – was curious to see Him. He was a short fellow and couldn't get near enough to get a glimpse of what was going on. Kinda funny, the people hated this unsavory little character as much as they feared him. They couldn't strike out at him physically, but they didn't have to let him through the tightening circle.
17. Zacchaeus – that was his name – being pretty resourceful ran ahead of the obvious parade route and shimmied up a sycamore tree. These gnarled oaks were pretty easy to climb and provided just enough height to see what was going. In a land where every plant was important because of the year round dry, dusty, overbearing heat, the sycamore or stubby oak was pretty useless. I suppose it did offer some street side shade. But, leave it to the Romans to find a use for it. These useless little hardwoods did provide easy material to make the crosses used in their sadistic executions.
18. Well, Zacchaeus did get a good vantage point, but not unnoticed. You have to love Jesus. First of all, he always championed the cause of the weak, the poor, the sick, and did more to humanize women than anyone I ever knew. The Athena Cult doesn't exactly elevate the dignity of women – at least not based on what I've had to treat in my practice.
19. As I was saying, Jesus, it seemed, was orchestrating this whole scene to make a point – in fact his big point. In the middle of walking down the street, reaching out to the people as only he could do, he stopped exactly parallel to the tree in which our intrepid tax collector sat.

20. Looking him straight in the eye, Jesus called to Zacchaeus to hurry down the tree, because he was going to his house for dinner. Well, Zacchaeus fairly fell out of the tree and Jesus did go to his house.
21. In doing my corroborating research on this I found the crowd's reaction to be most interesting. You know, we humans can be so fickle sometimes. Here Jesus is hugging on everyone, fixing runny noses, healing fibroid tumors that won't stop bleeding, straightening bent and broken limbs, and bent and broken spirits.
22. Even with his arm around somebody's sick child, he called up to the sick spirited Zacchaeus and the people turned on Jesus. You could just hear them and he went to Zacchaeus' house: "Oh, my God! He went to the (expletive deleted)'s house."
23. I just don't get it. Wouldn't you think that all those believers would be thrilled that Jesus would do something in the life of a corrupt politician? Who needs Jesus' work more?
24. My research – and CSI that I am – couldn't discover what was said at the dinner table. Boy would I like to have been a fruit fly on those figs! All we know is what Zacchaeus said and did after that visit from the Son of God.
25. On his own, Zacchaeus made a huge contribution to charity. Beyond that, he committed a self-imposed penalty at the most extreme level imposed by Jewish law. He could have made the case that he never intentionally defrauded anyone. After all, he only took his approved "cut" from the guys who actually collected the taxes.

26. Jesus' reaction was most interesting. Frankly, every time I think about it I am moved and motivated to be more energetic in sharing Jesus with others.
27. When Jesus picked Zacchaeus' house to visit and transform, it was a lot like being in an Operating Room under that special light we use that makes everything clear and obvious. This pathetic tax collector had become a distorted caricature of what God had intended of his chosen race. But in reconciling himself to God and his fellows, he became a "true Jew."
28. Jesus had the last word, as he always does: (Luke 19:10) "For the Son of Man came to seek out and save the lost."
29. I have more forensic evidence on this point that you'll hear about in the next weeks. But, please don't miss what my research is all about.
30. Dear Theophilus family, surely you must know how sick and basically corrupt humanity is – including you and me, or you wouldn't be here. At the end of the day Jesus completed his mission by dying on that barbaric Roman tree. Isn't it ironic that Jesus called to Zacchaeus and by implication calls to us to come down from our own tree of judgment? I love him for that because he went up on the tree to purchase my pardon. He was the only one qualified to pass that test. Believe you me, I understand about passing qualifying exams in my profession.
31. There's a couple of things you gotta know: Not only can Jesus pardon sins, Jesus is so powerful that He can even cure the deadness of people who are religious without possessing any religion – just like Zacchaeus. Jesus reminded Zacchaeus and us as he constantly seeks us out. And, like

Zacchaeus, what we say and do after dinner is of ultimate importance to our souls. While it is nice to be hospitable to Jesus, what will be our response after dinner?

32. Oh, look at the time. Gotta go. Have a patient waiting. So, Theophilus family, what are you going to do with Jesus this week?
33. Doc Lukas leaves Chapel and Mrs. Carvill prays.

Sermon 2 (preached October 23, 2005)

"Preaching, Pickerel, and Paralytics"

(Second in a series of four from the Gospel of Luke)

Text: Luke 4:18-19 (14-30 and by extension through 9:50)

Subject: What hallmarks of Jesus' Galilee ministry does Luke want Theophilus (and his other readers) to perceive?

Complement: The Synagogue pericope summarized Jesus' ministry in his home district in terms of his commission, his teaching, and his prophetic office.

Main/Exegetical Idea: The hallmarks of Jesus' Galilean ministry were summarized in the Synagogue pericope.

Homiletical Idea: Jesus reveals himself as the Messiah of God in the Nazareth Synagogue.

Purpose: I want the congregation to have a better understanding of Jesus' ministry in his home town in this second of four sermons outlining Luke. More importantly, I want to provoke a response to Jesus as either fraud or God.

Last week we had a visit, so I'm told, from someone who has become a very good friend of mine over the years – Doc Lukas. This week we'll continue our quick, four message visit to his life and times. We take up the story of Jesus today as he begins his ministry in the Galilee region – his home territory. During Advent, I feel sure that we'll revisit the familiar first part of Luke's Gospel.

For today, Luke transports us to the Lakes Region of Israel. Jesus had been brought up there in the home of Joseph the Carpenter. By now, Jesus was gaining quite a reputation for his sharing in many synagogues around Galilee and elsewhere.

Imagine the scene with me if you will. Just after returning from a month with Satan in the desert, Jesus goes to church. Luke – remember that details were important to him – captured the decision-demanding moment at Nazareth Synagogue. No other Gospel writer made that worship gathering so alive. Just picture it in your mind. Jesus read the Scripture: [READ LUKE 4:18, 19], rolled the scroll up and sat down. Silence. When Jesus broke that silence to underscore the fulfillment of Scripture they were all so proud of the hometown boy. God's love is generally a well received message. "He speaks so well. Can you believe this is Joseph's eldest? Such a silver tongue." Then Jesus speaks again. This time he reminds them of the whole prophecy – including judgment. Now, they want him dead!

This is how Jesus' so-called Galilean Ministry begins. Luke chooses several incidents very specifically recorded in Chapters 4 through 9 to summarize this time. It's really quite the action packed adventure. Jesus duels with demons. He heals all sorts of diseases and deformities. The young itinerant Messiah even has time to assemble his inner circle team of people, fishermen – or more correctly fishers of men. And, even as Jesus heals, he teaches and prophesies, and announces that God's Kingdom has arrived. Just before the end of this section, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up the summit of Mt. Tabor to pray. Here, these soon to be Apostles have an Isaiah-like moment as Jesus was revealed in a deeper way before their very eyes.

Let's go back to the Synagogue investigation/autopsy with Dr. Luke.

(What does Luke want us to understand about Jesus in this setting?)

- I. Jesus defines his commission.
 - A. He is the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy,
 - B. Jesus was "anointed" from eternity.
 - C. He was sent with good news –
 - 1. to the poor.
 - 2. to the disenfranchised.
 - 3. to the ill educated.
 - 4. to the destitute.

(What does Luke see as Jesus' purpose?)

- II. Jesus declares his mission.
 - A. Release – from our death sentence of original sin.
 - B. Recovery – from all sin's malaise.
 - C. Redemption – to be holy and be the means of holiness in the world.

(What response does Jesus' message demand in Luke's view?)

- III. Jesus demands the end of the old ways.
 - A. Jubilee – all is forgiven/but with the portent of judgment.
 - B. God's salvation is now an all inclusive offer that must be accepted.
 - C. Jubilee does away with the old prejudices and practices.

Dr. Luke has a way of surgically probing the soul. Jesus, in quoting Isaiah 61:1,2 purposefully didn't finish the second verse. There is a second part of the verse that says "to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God." Like the

faithful in the Nazareth Synagogue, we love the camaraderie of church. The fellowship, food, activities, even the Bible Study. We feel special – perhaps more so that people who aren't “with us.” But, when the message of Jesus probes the soul and demands change, where do we find ourselves?

Luke wants us to understand the ministry of Jesus right here in Nashua of Galilee in the fullness of Jesus' message. Jesus came to bring us so many wonderful things. But, above all, he came to make us a holy people. Once again, Dr. Luke leaves us with a question: Are you holy? Has the message and ministry of Jesus been applied to every part, or any part of your life? Body? Mind? Spirit? Or, like those good church people, do you want him dead, if you're really honest? Once again Luke begs the question: “What will you do with Jesus?”

Sermon 3 (preached October 30, 2005)

“This Isn’t Mr. Roger’s Neighborhood”

(Third in a series of four from the Gospel of Luke)

Text: Luke 10:25-37 (10:1-24 to be read)

Subject: Why did Jesus send out the 70?

Complement: He wanted to teach them the nature or scope (7- represented all the nations of the world) of discipleship.

Main/Exegetical idea: Jesus sent the 70 out as disciples to the world.

Homiletical Idea: The world is the Christian’s neighborhood.

Purpose: 1. To portray Jesus’ central teaching on his final journey to Jerusalem, and
2. Move the congregation to willfully embrace their responsibility to proclaim the gospel through recognizing, relating, and reflecting the love of God to their neighbors.

(Enter pulpit with a look of chagrin and frustration). I had a really great opening this morning but I’ve been stewing about something all week long. Even though it’s Sunday morning, I just have to get this off my chest.

(A new telling of the Good Samaritan Parable): I was talking with my good friend Chief Heffernan last week. Tim has the most interesting and strange story from the police log. There was a mugging down on Vine Street on the corner of Kinsley about ten days ago. Unfortunately, that’s not so unusual because that part of the “Tree Streets” area of town has a high incidence of criminal activity – drugs, numbers running,

prostitution, etc. What made the Chief take notice of this particular assault was the victim's account to the Officer. When the Sergeant interviewed him at the hospital, he stated the following: "I just got paid and stopped at the Sports Bar across from Norton's. Guess I stayed too long. Anyway, when I got a few blocks up the street these guys followed me and you see what happened. I'm all cut up. They tell me I got some busted bones in my left leg and arm and a couple of broken ribs. One made a small puncture in my lungs.

"I was just layin there. Seemed like a long time. Kept blankin out. But I remember that a Salvation Army truck stopped and let some kids out. Then, it just took off. I know the guy saw me cuz he looked me right in the eye. Then this big blue or black Church bus stopped and let some people out. I know it was a Church Bus. I seen it around the block all the time. Hate it cause I try to sleep on Sunday mornings and the (xxxx) horn blows. Then this other guy in a Hertz Renta Truck stops. He jumps out of the truck and I figure that's it; he's gonna finish the job the others started. But he calls you guys and all of a sudden here I am at Memorial Hospital.

"When I come to, I heard the guy talking with the nurses. He says he comes through here once a week or so on a regular run through Billerica. The guy finds out I got no insurance, so he puts it on his Master Card. Can you believe it? I was in the hospital for about a month and every week he came to see me and brought stuff I needed. He never told me his name. Don't get me wrong. I'm really thankful for all he done. But, isn't that what church people are supposed to do?"

The story I just told is a retelling of the Parable of the Good Samaritan. It didn't really happen that way. Or does it? Luke 9:51 through 19:44 might be subtitled: Jesus'

Journey towards destiny – Jerusalem. But it might also be called: Jesus teaching on the true nature of Discipleship. In the parable – a heavenly story with an earthly meaning – of the Good Samaritan, Jesus sums up what it means to be His disciple. You may ask.

(What is the nature of Discipleship?)

- I. Love your neighbor
 - A. We must recognize who is our neighbor.
 - B. We must relate to our neighbor.
 - C. We must reflect the love of God to our neighbor.

(How do we become true disciples?)

- II. Learn from Jesus.
 - A. Listen to Jesus.
 - B. Look to Jesus.
 - C. Lean on Jesus.

(What is the disciple's destiny?)

- III. Live for God.
 - A. Pursue peace. ("Peace is a condition in the world in which every part of creation can pursue and fulfill its destiny uninterrupted." Dr. Allen Ross in lectures on Isaiah.)
 - B. This means actively moving towards our personal Jerusalem regardless of opposition with all its implications.
 - C. Our goal, our Jerusalem is to have "our names written in heaven (Luke 10:20b)."

Jesus looked directly at the Jewish lawyer and finished the conversation with: “Go and do thou likewise.” Our Lord’s injunction to the Scribe begs the question for us today. Do we live out the qualities of a true Christian disciple? Are we marching forward towards our destinies as Christian Soldiers? Nashua proper and our own backyards are not exactly Mr. Roger’s Neighborhood. So again, Luke’s Gospel echoes the question across the ages to us: What will you do with Jesus’ command?

Sermon 4 (preached November 13, 2005)

“And so Theophilus...”

(Fourth in a series of four from the Gospel of Luke)

Text: Luke 24:45-49

Subject: What new perception of Jesus by the Disciples did Luke want his readers (Theophilus) to understand?

Complement: He was now revealed in all his fullness as Messiah.

Main/Exegetical Idea: Luke wanted to leave his readers with the understanding that now the disciples really knew who Jesus was.

Homiletical Idea: In Jesus the Scripture is fulfilled that he is the risen Lord, restoration comes in his name, and he will release the disciples with power to preach the Gospel to the entire world.

Purpose: 1. This is the final message of four surveying the Gospel of Luke; 2. To inspire the people to be witnesses for Jesus empowered by the Holy Spirit in obedience to Jesus.

1. Dr. Jack Lukas returns for a “wrap-up” visit.
2. Ah, Theophilus family. (Looks over chart). I see that you’ve done very well – the synagogue visit, Samaritan parable. Good, good.
3. Your prognosis is quite good. In fact, I think you’ve got a pretty clear picture of things. There’s just one more set of incidents I need to tell you about.

4. Actually, there's more, but I may have to write another scroll. I think I'd call it...Activities of the Church People, Interventions Among the Romans, maybe even something like Acts of the Apostles. I don't know. Have to think about it later.
5. Anyway, after the successful murder conspiracy of the Jewish religious elite and the Roman invaders, Jesus was buried. (RETELL verses 1-12). It seems that the women were considered somewhat unreliable because of their tendencies towards hysteria. Of course Peter had to see for himself. Talk about hysteria. Paul and I had more than one run in with him along the way. But, that's a story for another scroll.
6. I guess from my research and the people I've talked to, the thought of Jesus coming back to life – even though he consistently taught that He would – seemed too good to be true.
7. There was another strange report by a fellow called Cleopas and his travelling buddy (RETELL EMMAUS RD. STORY).
8. When Cleopas got back to Jerusalem – pretty excited I might add – people listened but still didn't quite buy into this new "tale."
9. Apparently, even while Cleopas was finishing his story, Jesus showed up. I find quite fascinating the way He challenged their disbelief. There is something to this business of mass hysteria or mass hallucination. Funny that they looked down on the women for their excitability. As a forensic man – I think I mentioned this before – to have them touch Him, to eat a piece of this with them seems incontrovertible evidence.

10. Then in a sort of playful way, Jesus reminded them that He had said that this is how it would be. QUOTE VERSE 44. Not that it matters really, but there was the sense that this person was in two dimensions at the same time.
11. And all of a sudden the most remarkable thing happened. My sources said that Jesus caused a miraculous transformation in their minds and hearts. It made me think of spittle and clay eye cleansing. Jesus healed their minds. What they so intensely wanted and needed the risen Jesus gave them.
12. But that's not the end. He repeated one last time for them the need for Christ to suffer and then defeat death. Theophilus family, he didn't leave his followers abandoned and wondering what to do next like so many counterfeit prophets. He was emphatic that repentance and forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed in His name. Furthermore, they would be the ones to do it – in all the world. Jesus made one final promise – and at this point, from everything I've heard and researched – they knew this one would certainly be kept. He promised power from on high. In fact, they weren't to move out until they received it.
13. After that, he sort of stepped away from the group. A couple of the Apostles told me that his eyes were teary. He raised his hands as if to hug the whole group and as he gave a blessing – much like Moses, and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did to their children – rose like a dove and out of their line of sight.
14. I still get goose bumps when I think about it. The believers found themselves not wistful, but full of joy and an unusual need to be consumed with praising and worshipping God.

15. And so Theophilus family, that's the story of Jesus. He is risen. His legacy is restoration of fallen men, women, and children. Jesus' final action was to release his disciples – which includes you Theophilus family – if you believe – to be powerful agents of his change in the whole world.
16. As usual, I have to get back to the clinic. You're doing really well – at least most of you. If you just keep studying the Scriptures, let them speak to you, and obey – that's the tough one – obey – you'll be just fine. Jesus wants to overwhelm you with his power and make you overwhelmingly powerful. So, what do you say? Are you ready to obey Jesus?

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